Unbalancing Binaries: Re-thinking Lilith and Eve in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "Christabel," Christina Rossetti's "Goblin Market," and George MacDonald's *Lilith*

By

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Abstract

In the nineteenth century, religion, or rather, religious figures played an important role in determining appropriate societal roles for women. Two particular religious figurations—Lilith and Eve—began to emerge more frequently in Victorian literary works as a way to illustrate, discuss, and critique the binary formulation of the angel in the house and the fallen woman. This thesis examines three works that utilize the symbolic representations of these religious female figures in order comment on the fallen woman and angel in the house binary, as well as the place of women within the beginning, middle, and end of the nineteenth century. I argue that by incorporating the Lilith and Eve typology, Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "Christabel," (1816), Christina Rossetti's "Goblin Market," (1862), and George MacDonald's *Lilith* (1895), exemplify and discuss the tensions surrounding the formulation of set female roles within Victorian society. Thus, it is though problematizing the rigid binaries of the angel in the house and fallen woman within in these three texts that I illuminate the cracks within the dichotomy.

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Dedication

To my parents: Faye and Greig Taylor,
I could not have done any of this or come as far as I have without your constant support, encouragement, faith, and love—
Thank you for believing in me.

Introduction

Representations of nineteenth-century women as both the angel in the house and the fallen woman form a heavily studied area of scholarship. The trend by many scholars, including Mary Poovey and Nancy Armstrong, was to examine the dichotomy as a way to define nineteenth-century feminine identity rather than question it. In contrast to such studies, my thesis will unsettle the angel in the house and the fallen woman binary using the religious figures of Lilith and Eve in order to demonstrate the inconsistencies within this specific binary formulation of nineteenth-century femininity. During this period, spiritualized femininity was pitted against the body, epitomized by religious models of Mary versus Mary Magdalene. Such a dichotomy of spiritual figurations echoes the Victorians' own emphasis on binaries. This study looks not at the opposition but rather the overlap in representations of the Lilith and Eve archetypes in the nineteenth-century. Significant interest in Eve followed Milton's *Paradise Lost*, published in 1667, which influenced both Romantic and Victorian writers. In the Fall of Man, Milton provides Eve with a voice, but he also portrays her as vain and selfish. This interpretation carried over into the Romantic period's notions of femininity, in which middle-class women were characterized as "obsessed with their personal appearance, with beauty and fashion" (Mellor 36). Other representations of Lilith and Eve appeared throughout the nineteenth-century. John Keats' poem "Lamia" (1819) adapted aspects of the Lilith myth, while Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891) represented Tess as a fallen Eve figure. These works are just a few of the texts within the Victorian period that develop and interpret the Lilith and Eve myths. In what follows, I focus on three nineteenth-century texts that involve Lilith and Eve as figures of femininity.

Specifically, I argue that Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Christina Rossetti, and George MacDonald use these religious models in ways that unsettle binary gender constructions, each work illustrating a different perspective throughout the period. In order solidify my argument, I will briefly provide some additional theological context for my project to illustrate the interactions between both Judaism and Christianity in the nineteenth century. As a result, it will demonstrate how the religious figures of Lilith and Eve, more specifically Lilith, would have been familiar to authors and poets of the century.

Judaism and Christianity share a tumultuous history attributable to Christianity's effort to distance and disassociate itself from Judaism and as Marvin Perry and Fredrick Schweitzer suggest the resulting Christian hostility lead to the development of myths that "demonized Jews and generated irrational hatred and fear" (x). It was in the nineteenth century that the Jewish community began to legitimize their political identity (Scheinberg 4). The tie between these religions is important as it establishes the re-introduction of Jewish culture into Victorian society. Yet it was the re-emergence of Jewish culture and subsequently the Judaic religion, which caused nineteenth century Christianity to struggle with the anxiety of its own originality and creation. Christianity had a genuine concern in this respect as early Christianity shared strong links with Judaism including: "the precociousness of the human being who was created in God's image, its belief that God rules history, its awareness of human sinfulness, its call for repentance, and its appeal to God for forgiveness [were all] rooted in Judaism" (Perry and Schweitzer x). Susannah Heschel suggests that "Judaism and its Old Testament have a historical and moral claim to theological superiority by virtue of having been developed first" and it is Christianity's fear of being subordinate to Judaism that was a "motivating power behind Christian denial of Judaism's religious

legitimacy" (232). Christianity, however, was not alone in its anxiety. Judaism's reference to the story of Christianity's origins "as a movement within Jewish history makes the claim that Judaism was the original religion precisely at the time when Jews were reforming their liturgy, synagogue architecture, and religious observances along the lines of Protestantism-hence, claiming Jesus for Judaism, is similarly, an expression of a Jewish anxiety of influence" (232). As Cynthia Scheinberg states:

> ... the renewed attention to the Hebrew Scriptures in the wake of the German Higher Criticism and the theories of Hebrew poetry generated, in part, by Johann Gottfried Herder and Bishop Lowth...intersect with larger ideological concerns in Victorian English culture [surrounding] the increasing anxiety about the meaning of English Christian identity within an active imperialistic regime, and the increasing anxiety about the status of women (4).

As a result, the tensions between the re-emerging Judaic religion and Christianity in the Victorian period provided access for authors and poets—like Coleridge, Rossetti, and MacDonald—to various religious scriptures and myths, allowing them to familiarize themselves with many religious figures, including Lilith and Eve.

According to Alfred Clement Goodson, Coleridge, received training in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek, in conjunction with English composition while he attended Christ's Hospital, a London grammar school. As a result, he would have been well versed in both the Christian and Hebrew scriptures and the religious figures associated with them (Goodson 6). Coleridge's interest in Germanic Philosophy and his knowledge of both John Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Goethe's *Faust* (1808) also suggest that he would have had knowledge of both the Eve and Lilith figures specifically. While she does not indicate Coleridge's Judaic

ties, Katherine Garvin draws direct correlations between Christabel and Eve and Geraldine and Lilith: "the snake symbolizes the lamia conception that is surely the core Christabel's meaning...a hint of what is older even than Eve? Lilith?" (23). Therefore, it is arguable that Coleridge would have had a working knowledge of both Lilith and Eve given his education and exposure.

For nineteenth century women, particularly poets and authors, the re-emergence of Judaism provided a way for them to engage with scripture on a different level apart from Christianity. Cynthia Scheinberg suggests, "because the Hebrew scriptures offer numerous examples of women acting as prophets, poets, and agents of religious history, women of Christian and Jewish affiliation used those Hebraic women as models for both religious and literary identity" (265). She continues, as a result "the discourse of poetry repeatedly intersects with the discourse of Biblical women" (267). Christina Rossetti's pre-Raphaelite connection through her brother Dante Gabriel Rossetti, suggests exposure to the figuration of Lilith, as one of her brother's more famous paintings was entitled *Lady Lilith*. In addition, her religious background and familiarity with Judaic texts, religious figures, and her consistent refiguring of Eve—as either the reason for the subjugation of women as suggested by Diane D'Amico or as possessing Christ-like virtues as indicated by Virginia Sickbert—allows for the presupposition of Rossetti's knowledge of the existence of Lilith, Eve, and the mythology that surrounds them both.

In regard to George MacDonald, I will keep it brief as his association with the figurations of Lilith and Eve is quite apparent and will be explored in furher detail in chapter three. According to Rolland Hein, MacDonald had an extensive background in both Christian

and Judaic theology as an ordained minister and as such incorporated his knowledge of Lilith and Eve into his book Lilith.

Ultimately, what is the most compelling about how these texts utilize the religious figures of Lilith and Eve is both how they illustrate the relevancy of the figures throughout the nineteenth century and the lack of scholarship that incorporates the Lilith typology. The authorial interpretations of Lilith in particular, are intriguing as her ambiguity and lack definability provides her with a freedom that Eve does not have access to. With that said, it was often that independent freedom that caused the demonization of her figure. Even today, Lilith and Eve are still imbedded in our culture informing constructions of femininity, only now Lilith has become a source of empowerment and strength for women, while Eve is considered a more limiting figure of womanhood. By looking back at how the nineteenth-century used these female religious figures to influence formulations of Victorian womanhood and at the same time deconstruct those notions provides insight into how femininity was and to a certain extent still is culturally constructed. Consequently, femininity in one form or another seems to be under constant re-negotiation. As Kath McGillis suggests in reference to the figures of Lilith and Eve in MacDonald's *Lilith*: "their appearance or their name are ways of containing what cannot be contained. In the new economy there will be no naming and homes will not confine" (54).

Spanning almost a century, with Coleridge's "Christabel" appearing in 1816, Rossetti's "Goblin Market" in 1862, and MacDonald's *Lilith* in 1895, these three works provide a broad overview of the changes that were occurring in religion and gender. Representing a range of genres, these texts demonstrate how Lilith and Eve figurations function in different contexts as expressed through different textual modes. With Coleridge's

poetic fragment "Christabel," Rossetti's poetic fairytale "Goblin Market," and MacDonald's fantasy novel *Lilith*, each genre opens up different avenues to apply and explore in these three texts. In "Christabel," Coleridge contrasts a sexualized figure, Geraldine, with a symbolic Eve. Though these characters initially appear as opposites, however, Coleridge's use of the gothic in his poetic fragment ultimately blurs the distinction between them. Similarly, Rossetti's doubling of Lizzie and Laura as good and bad versions of Eve and Lilith is made possible through her use of the poetic fairytale. Finally, with MacDonald's literal incorporation of Lilith and Eve in his novel *Lilith*, he tries to re-imagine nineteenth-century femininity by suggesting how the gender ideals of the angel in the house and the fallen woman have changed over the course of the century, via conventions like the fantastic and the gothic. His character Lona, Lilith's daughter, is an illustration of the reformed woman and is a more accurate depiction of late Victorian femininity.

A brief look at some of the leading pioneers in the field of eighteenth and nineteenth-century scholarship shows how they formed the main concepts surrounding gender and the gothic that are relevant, and vital, to my analysis. Ellen Moers' *Literary Women* (1976) and Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) are considered innovative, as they helped to validate the female writing tradition. In *Literary Women*, Moers first coined the term "female gothic" and set the stage for making women's writing and the gothic vital areas of study in literature. In addition, she suggested that the female gothic is a politically subversive genre "articulating women's dissatisfaction with patriarchal structures and offering a coded expression of their fears of entrapment within the domestic and the female body" (Wallace and Smith 2). Moers' work proved to be influential and inspiring to many other critics, including Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar. In their *The Madwoman in the*

Attic, Gilbert and Gubar revisit neglected areas of feminist criticism and state that their study of nineteenth-century female authorship is "trying to recover not only a major (and neglected) female literature but a whole (neglected) female history" (xii). While Gilbert and Gubar's analysis utilizes some religious and iconographic images of women, they use figurations of women more as a resource for nineteenth-century female authors to adopt "a protective camouflage that disguised but did not conceal their talent," rather than as a way to illustrate binary representations of Victorian femininity (582). Gilbert and Gubar discuss the struggles these women experience navigating a restrictive patriarchal society while attaining relative authorial success. In *Woman and the Demon* (1982), Nina Auerbach tries to refocus the study of Victorian culture, and in particular, the function of myth and its effects on Victorian women. She critiques the one-dimensional view feminists in the early 1970s had of the mythology and images of Victorian women, whom feminists often presented as having a "half-life in society—and nothing else" (3). Auerbach suggests that a return to the symbolic images of Victorian women as "angels and demons, nuns and whores, whom it seemed so easy and so liberating to kill" is needed "in order to retrieve a less tangible, but also less restricting, facet of woman's history than the social sciences can encompass" (3). As a result, Auerbach's analysis relies heavily on symbolic, mythological, religious, and cultural representations of women within Victorian culture. In addition, Auerbach became an authority on the culturally idealized dichotomy of the angel in the house and the fallen woman through her discussion of angelic and demonic nineteenth-century representations of womanhood within her text. Thus, she validated "religious and literary imagination," finding that "the Victorian woman's power within a community of popular faith reveals her as central, not marginal, in the human inheritance" (219).

By contrast, Nancy Armstrong and Mary Poovey analyzed gender and Victorian culture by shifting from Auerbach's more symbolic analysis to a more ideological way of thinking about Victorian women, similar to that which Gilbert and Gubar first presented. Armstrong and Poovey, like Gilbert and Gubar, presented a more conceptual study of Victorian women, somewhat cementing the shift from the symbolic analysis. Armstrong's *Desire and Domestic Fiction* (1987) is considered a ground-breaking source of canonical criticism. Its intent is to return agency and power to nineteenth-century middle-class women, and minimize patriarchal authority, by emphasizing that "the female in nineteenth-century British middle-class culture is empowered (she is an agent rather than merely a victim)" (268). In this way, Armstrong both subverted and opened up new ways of adapting feminist theory in order to provide a clearer picture of the role of women within the nineteenth century. Poovey followed closely with *Uneven Developments* (1988), which proved to be just as influential as Armstrong's work. The book, focused on the mid-Victorian period, examines the controversies that provided "glimpses of specific ways in which gender was simultaneously constructed, deployed, and contested—and the extent to which it was, as an effect and a cause of [her] ideological work, uneven" (4). Ultimately, her study illustrates the "instabilities" of an ideological construction within mid-Victorian gender representations and how change is facilitated by that "unevenness" (4). In doing so, however, both Armstrong and Poovey define nineteenth-century femininity within the binary of the angel in the house and the fallen woman in order to discuss other issues concerning gender within Victorian society, rather than discussing how the binary creates its own tension within Victorian womanhood. The work of the aforementioned scholars is subsequently often referenced in the literature pertaining to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century gender issues. William Elliott's

publication in 2002, *The Angel Out of the House*, and Ellen Rosenman and Claudia Klaver's text from 2008, *Other Mothers: Beyond the Maternal Ideal*, for instance, both consistently refer to the previously mentioned scholars, particularly, Armstrong and Poovey, illustrating that their relevance in the late twenty-first century still resonates.

While studies often correlate nineteenth-century gender issues and religion most often within the framework of a discussion on gender, religion has largely been relegated to the background. Around the end of the twentieth century, however, scholarship began to focus more heavily on the influence of religion, specifically the impact religious figurations of women had in forming cultural ideals about Victorian womanhood. The figure of Eve, in particular, became a focal point for many forms of analysis and scholarship. Ann Hogan's *Reassessing the Angel in the House* (1994), John Tosh's *A Man's Place* (1999), Sue Morgan's *Women, Religion, and Feminism in Britain 1750-1900* (2002), and Cynthia Scheinberg's *Women's Poetry and Religion in Victorian England* (2002), are just a few works that reveal the particular importance religion and female religious figures had on forming idealized constructions of Victorian femininity. My project combines the different trajectories of this scholarship. I incorporate symbolic, ideological, and gothic elements in order to demonstrate how one central nineteenth-century gender conceptualization—the angel in the house and the fallen woman—can be analyzed and deconstructed. The religious figurations of Lilith and Eve in three specific texts that span the nineteenth-century provide the basis for the conceptualized model of the angel and the fallen woman dichotomy. This analysis thus offers a fresh perspective on the problematic binary construction of the angel in the house and fallen woman using the first women—Lilith and Eve—to simultaneously

deconstruct this idealized conceptualization of Victorian femininity and illustrate the progression of feminine identity throughout the Victorian period.

As stated above, my analysis will trace the progress and evolution of one key Victorian conceptualization of feminine identity. Over the course of the nineteenth century, women were increasingly defined according to gender norms that came to be known as the angel in the house and the fallen woman. One side represented spiritualized innocence and the other represented the tainted body. Religion was central in Victorian culture and as such was influential in determining feminine ideals and roles within society. The terms "angel" and "fallen" themselves carry religious connotations, as "the condition of fallenness derives from the act of original sin," and angels were considered the attendants and messengers of a deity (Anderson 3). Originally, Nina Auerbach suggests, angels were masculine and commanded an enviable freedom: without boundaries or limitations, they had the ability to "take possession of infinite space" (Auerbach 66). Auerbach notes that the feminized Victorian angel in the house was a "bizarre object of worship, [in] her virtuous femininity with its inherent limitations" (66). She continues by stating, "[i]n the immobilization the phrase suggests [the female angel] can exist only within families, while the masculine angels existed everywhere" (Auerbach 66). For real Victorian women, this "angel" ideal represented confinement. The public sphere, including the realms of "exertion, business and politics," was assigned to men, while the sphere of "private and domestic of affections" was relegated to women (Anderson 13). For women, the public sphere contained forces that could fracture their image of purity and cause them to become fallen. As fallen women, they were also responsible for shoring up "normative conceptions of masculine identity" (43). In other

words, in the public sphere women became fallen and were accountable for creating the desire in men that caused them to seek out prostitutes.

Religious figures such as Eve and Lilith reinforced, to some degree, the assumptions underpinning the opposition between archetypes of the angel in the house and the fallen woman. Nineteenth-century authors could ground their ideas of feminine identity within the authority of religious texts. The Book of Genesis, in particular, provided a central gender mythology for eighteenth- and nineteenth-century authors. It tells the story of God's creation of Adam and Eve and their disobedience that led to the fall of humankind. The Adam and Eve creation myth held substantial power in the formation of gender roles, particularly those pertaining to women. In the passages about Eve, for example, authors found a basis for shaping female characters. One particular passage from the Genesis story underlies the symbolic representation of Eve within "Christabel," "Goblin Market," and *Lilith*:

> And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh…And the man said, the woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. And the Lord God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat…Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And

> unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life...
>
> (King James Bible, 2:21-24, 3:12-13, 3:16-17)

Building on perceptions of Eve as a typology for feminine identity, religious doctrine maintained both the idea that "an independent woman can only represent a fundamental disruption of a divinely ordered state of affairs" and that "to question this arrangement is to be unfaithful" (Phillips 104). Over time, Eve came to be regarded as either the "evil temptress that seduced Adam into sin" or "the foolish weak woman who caused the fall of mankind" (D'Amico 120). If Eve is often blamed, however, her culpability as the instigator of the fall is frequently counterbalanced by her position as the mother of humanity. By nineteenth-century standards, Eve is thus an ambiguous figure who traverses the apparently fixed boundary between "good" and "evil" concepts of gender.

Details surrounding Lilith's origins are obscure at best, as she is less central to canonical Christian theology. She is mentioned in passing in various sources within the Bible, but the most conclusive source in the Bible is the Book of Genesis. Her story is more fully referenced in a rabbinic Midrash, a Jewish text used for biblical interpretation. Michelle Osherow notes that the Lilith myth was created to explain the discrepancies between Genesis chapter one, which states, "God created the human species in his own image . . . male and female he created them," and chapter two, in which Eve is created from Adam's rib (Osherow 3). The Lilith myth most commonly originates from a Midrash located in the *Alpha Beta of Ben Sira*, published between 700 and 1000 A.D. She is depicted as a deliberate counterpart to Eve:

> After the Holy One created the first human being, Adam, He said: "It is not good for Adam to be alone." He created a woman, also from the earth, and called her Lilith. They quarreled immediately. She said: "I will not lie below you." He said, "I will not lie below you, but above you. For you are fit to be below me." She responded: "We are both equal because we both come from the earth." Neither listened to the other. When Lilith realized what was happening, she pronounced the Ineffable name of God and flew off into the air. Adam rose in prayer before the Creator, saying, "The woman you gave me has fled from me." Immediately the Holy One sent three angels after her. The Holy One said to Adam: "If she wants to return, all the better. If not, she will have to accept that one hundred of her children will die every day." The angels went after her, finally locating her in the sea. . . . They told her what God had said, and she did not want to return. (*Alpha Betha of Ben Sira* 23A-B)

Unlike Eve, Lilith is seldom mentioned directly in early literature; rather, the idea of her is conveyed via such terms as witch, demon, snake witch, and succubus. By the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, however, Lilith as a character became more popular in literary works as a representation of demonized femininity. She appears as the "snake witch," though she is not named, in Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667). In Goethe's *Faust* (1808), she is named directly: "Observe her with great care! That's Lilith /.../ Adam's first wife / Beware That lovely hair of hers, those tresses / Which she incomparably delights to wear! / The young man whom she lures into their snare / She will not soon release from her caresses" (1992 Greenberg Translation, lines 4206 to 4211). Later, Keats mentions her in his poem "Lamia" (1819), where she is identified with "a fabulous monster [who was] supposed to have the

body of a woman, and to prey upon human beings and suck the blood of children, as well as a witch, she-demon" (Osherow 2).

If Lilith is typically associated with seductive and fallen femininity, however, she is also—like Eve—connected with motherhood. Both religious figures were considered the first women and therefore the mothers of humanity: For the Victorians especially, maternity was connected with woman's rightful place in home, where she is the "sexless, moralized angel" (Poovey 11). Motherhood was viewed by the Victorians as innate in women due to their nurturing natures; as a result, it was considered a role that gave women purpose. Representations of the idealized Victorian mother as sexless were vexed, however, insofar as sex and the body were prerequisites for motherhood. Mary Poovey calls this ideological difficulty "the persistence in the domestic ideal of a historically specific and apparently antithetical image of woman" in representations of "woman as Eve" (9). Eve embodied two ideals of motherhood: the "Mother of Humanity" and the "Mother of our Miseries" (9). As the "Mother of Humanity," she symbolized idealized motherhood. As the "Mother of our Miseries," by contrast, Eve represented either "the part of man responsible for the fall" or "man's foil...associated with flesh, desire ... [and] susceptible to impulses and passions" (8-9). This potentially disruptive interpretation of Eve, as both the nurturer of humanity and the cause of its fall, highlights the potential overlap between spiritualized views of motherhood connected with the ideal of the angel in the house, and contrasting views of the fallen woman.

Difficulties related to the popular understanding of Eve were both mitigated and compounded when she was represented as a part of a pair with Lilith. Lilith was the first mother but, due to her chosen exile from Eden, she quite literally falls from grace when God

demonizes her after she chooses not to return to Adam. Some may interpret Lilith's choice not to return and submit to Adam as running away from her maternity; however, it can also be viewed as a choice to not submit to patriarchal demands. Either way, as a result, Lilith becomes a fallen mother figure, as part of her punishment was that "one hundred of her children die each day" (Hurwitz 120). She complicates the mother ideal because rather than nurture her children she is the cause of their demise. Lilith re-emerged in the nineteenth century to fill the role of the fallen mother, the antithesis to Eve's role as the angelic mother. By filling the role as the fallen mother figure, Lilith allows Eve to redeem herself as the cause of the fall and become the sexless angelic mother. By contrast, Lilith expresses the demonized side of the opposition, illustrating that when left uncontrolled female sexuality is disruptive and destructive. If Lilith is demonized, however, she is also free to transcend borders and boundaries. As a fallen figure, she has both the mobility and the power to exceed the limitations of the idealized Victorian woman. Eve, however, shares characteristics with the angel in the house through her limitation and boundaries. She is first bound by her environment in the Garden of Eden and then through the enforced subjugation of Adam, much like how the walls of her home and husband bound the domestic Victorian woman.

In the early and mid-century, religion was still a heavy influence in Victorian culture, and in order to maintain strict control over women, religious figurations of womanhood, including Lilith and Eve, were used to reinforce the binary opposition of the angel in the house and the fallen woman. By the end of the century, women's roles were undergoing a distinct change, as were attitudes towards religion. In the 1870s, a new type of woman emerged from the domestic Victorian home into the public sphere. Wealthier women increasingly engaged in politically focused philanthropy, while unmarried middle and lower

class women began to enter the work force in increasing numbers as typists, teachers, and nurses.[1] As women became part of the labour force, the masculine and feminine roles connected with public and private spheres became less distinct. With the emergence of evolutionary theory in the second half of the century, many middle-class Victorians attended church strictly to maintain the appearance of respectability. As a result of these shifts, definitions of femininity began to shift as well. As religion lost some of its power, the figures of Lilith and Eve began to be used less in Victorian society to reinforce binary views of women. Instead, along with images of women in the rising gothic genre, Lilith and Eve were employed by authors as figures of change or as a way to dismantle previous notions of Victorian womanhood.

While the primary emphasis of this study falls on thematic representations of Lilith and Eve in relation to historical shifts in the formulations of gender identity, the gothic forms a common thread that connects the three texts I examine. Specifically, the gothic made and shaped literary representations of Lilith and Eve via the convention of the double or doppelgänger. The gothic as a literary genre emerged in the eighteenth century and was developed in opposition to neoclassicism's one-sided reliance on "reason, restraint, and order" (Brennan 1). The genre emphasized the danger of this limited way of thinking by "underscoring the need to bring back into conscious awareness repressed and compensatory values as feeling, mystery, superstition, instinct, spontaneity, excess—even the unconscious self" (1). Juliann Fleenor suggests in her work *Female Gothic* (1983) that "[t] he gothic

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[1] Karl Ittmann discusses women working in Victorian England, who "through their roles as wage earners and consumers, intruded upon the public sphere" (223–236).

world is one of nightmare, and that nightmare is created by the individual in conflict with the values of her society and her prescribed role" (10). She goes on:

> In a false social order good and evil cannot be identified except as good and evil women and men whose identities are constantly in flux.... Characters become symbols in a world seeking to escape those very symbols, and through their own struggles, they become even more firmly entangled in them. (Fleenor 10)

This state of identity flux suggests that the "ambivalence toward the female (good and evil) has been internalized," which can result in an ambivalence toward the female-self that leads "to feelings of self-disgust and self-fear rather than fear and disgust of something outside her" (Fleenor 11).

The doppelgänger, or double, is a literary device specific to the gothic genre and provides physical shape to the tension that exists between separation and unity. John Herdman suggests the double stands for the "contradiction within unity, and for unity in spite of division, the likeness of expressing the unity of the individual, the doubleness or complementarity expressing division within the personality" (2). The gothic double or doppelgänger tropes are important to this study because they shape expressions of changing attitudes towards gender identity. Nicola Trott argues that from the beginning the gothic was a "mixed creation," or rather a "narrative form marked by the same kind of opposition and doubleness that featured in the semantic development of the word gothic: on the one hand, it registered a simple antagonism to prevailing cultural standards; on the other, it was itself intrinsically divided" (488). Rosemary Jackson takes this idea a step further when she positions dualism as a theme within the gothic:

> Dualism is thematically central to nineteenth-century versions of Gothic. There develops a recognizable literature of the double, dualism being one of the literary 'myths' produced by desire for 'otherness' in this period. The double signifies a desire to be re-untied with a lost center of personality and it recurs as an obsessive motif throughout the Romantic and post-Romantic art. (108)

The male double was of particular interest at the end of the Victorian period, as an exploration of masculine complexity. Among the most notable examples of fin-de-siècle fiction that explore the fear of the male double are Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1881) and Oscar Wilde's *The Portrait of Dorian Grey* (1891). The female double is also symbolically represented in Victorian prose and fiction. The gothic became the perfect device to explore and illuminate the complexities of feminine identity. Clemens suggests that from the very beginning the gothic took "aim at cultural 'blind spots' and worked against whatever form of censorship [societies had] imposed, whether psychological, social, historical, or literary" (213). This made it the ideal genre in which to explore alternative feminine identities.

Female writers like Christina Rossetti turned to writing in the gothic mode as it served as a device enabling them to explore "their personal desires, and their place in the public and social world" (47). According to Marina Warner, the double is "a complex, even riddling concept: it can mean a second self, or a second existence, usually co-existing in time, but sometimes sequentially," as well as "a look-alike who is a false twin, or, more commonly, someone who does not resemble oneself outwardly but embodies some inner truth" (163). Otto Rank suggests that, from a more psychological standpoint, the double manifests

> Twofold existence: in his perceptible presence and in his invisible image which only death can set free. This, and nothing else, is his psyche. In the living human being, completely filled with his soul, there dwells, like an alien guest, a weaker double, his self other than his psyche . . . whose realm is the world of dreams. (60)

The double or doppelgänger can be corporeal, non-corporeal, or ghostly. Ultimately, the double epitomizes by contrast the current state of metamorphosis:

> as a threat to personality on the one hand, of possession by another, and estrangement from self. . . . Tugging strongly and contradictorily against this at the same time, the double also solicits hope and dreams for the [self], of [possibly] becoming different while remaining the same person, of escaping the self. (Warner 165)

The motif of the double seems intended to reveal inconsistencies within cultures and so provides an ideal way in which to explore two iconic but quite different female religious figures: Lilith and Eve. Lilith is said to be Adam's equal, his independent and uncontrollable first wife, and originates from Judaic folklore Eve, by contrast, is regarded as Adam's subservient and naïve wife; she also originates from Judaism and therefore appears in Christian religions as well. The common way to view these figures was in comparison to each other: Lilith the experienced, demonic whore versus Eve the innocent, naïve angel. Yet such fixed views of those binary terms of conventional female identity embodied by Lilith and Eve fail to account for their similarities: both Lilith and Eve demonstrated innocence at the beginning of their creation and both ended up as fallen figures at the end of their tales. The gothic double helps to reveal this inconsistency by upsetting the view of women as angelic or demonic. In the case of Lilith and Eve, aspects "to reflect each other" become more important than their opposition (Herdman 2). The gothic double, or doppelgänger,

allows an exploration of my theory of unsettled femininity through the lenses of religion, gender, and culture in the works I have chosen.

In what follows, I explore how Lilith and Eve, with some help from the gothic double, unsettle binary constructions of feminine identity within Coleridge's "Christabel," Rossetti's "Goblin Market," and MacDonald's *Lilith*. Each chapter is a case study of a specific time and place that together illustrate the evolution of perceptions of Victorian femininity throughout the nineteenth century. I chose these texts specifically because their unique use of multiple female characters and religious symbolism and their use of the gothic and the double demonstrates the existence of an ambivalent view of feminine identity at different points throughout the nineteenth century. The first chapter focuses on Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "Christabel." Reflecting notions of femininity in transition, Coleridge's poem involves the innocent Christabel and demonized Geraldine as aspects of fragmented femininity. Like Eve, Christabel is portrayed as a weak and foolish woman who is easily corrupted, while Geraldine represents a highly sexualized Lilith who taints everything she touches. On the surface, these characters appear to be opposites; however, their connections to each other and the fluidity of their interactions suggest a more complex, connected relationship. Other critics, like William Ulmer, have also drawn correlations between both Christabel and Mary as well as between Christabel and Christ-like imagery; however, my analysis will strictly be limited to the symbolic representations of Lilith and Eve within in the poem (378). I argue that Coleridge uses the gothic motif of doubling to explore disjointed definitions of gender and to critique the cultural religious ideology by mixing Christian and Pagan imagery with the gothic. Over time, difficulties managing competing binary notions of femininity were supplemented by the more concrete ideals of the Victorians. Where

Coleridge is often ambivalent in his representations of femininity, Rossetti is openly critical of binary formations of gender.

In Chapter Two, I examine Christina Rossetti's engagement with the dichotomy of the angel in the house and the fallen woman. In "Goblin Market," Laura and Lizzie represent versions of Lilith and Eve, and Rossetti uses the gothic in order to complicate the constructions of the fallen woman and the angel in the house. Each sister represents aspects of both Lilith and Eve and thus demonstrates connections rather than segregations. Rossetti's use of the Lilith and Eve typology thus unsettles the religious associations of these figures. The gothic double connects the sisters to each other and to Lilith and Eve. The gothic double traditionally relies on fear, the idea of replacement or fragmented identity, but Rossetti changes this by using the double to represent sisterhood and domesticity; there is nothing dark or suspicious about her use of the double. Perhaps most notably, Rossetti treats Laura, the Lilith type, as more than a demon or fallen woman figure. Kinship connects the sisters to Lilith and Eve, rather than divides them. Fusing fairytale and gothic, Rossetti uses her characters to critique the idea of binary definitions of womanhood in the nineteenth-century; however, her conventional ending re-establishes those boundaries, offering an indication of the tenuous connections between religion and gender identity in the middle of the century.

In the final chapter, George MacDonald's *Lilith* allows me to explore the changing attitudes towards religion and women at the end of the nineteenth century. Until recently, *Lilith* has been largely unstudied and is one of the few nineteenth-century texts that makes direct comparisons between Lilith and Eve. Indeed, where Coleridge and Rossetti both employ doubles to disrupt and fragment conventional binary notions of gender identity, MacDonald's fantastic text merges Lilith and Eve into one woman: Lilith's daughter Lona. In

Lilith, his characters of the same name, Lilith and Eve, illustrate both the limitations of ideals, such as the angel in the house and the fallen woman, and the disillusionment with conventional religious thought at the end of the century by taking up the ways that the representations of the religious figure Lilith and Eve are used to critique cultural constructions of Victorian womanhood. The characters Lilith and Eve represent obsolete idealizations of womanhood, and Lona is refigured in the image of both of them. In her seminal discussion of gendered symbolism in the Victorian era, Auerbach argues that "MacDonald softens his ruling woman by splitting her into several more palatable variations of herself; still, these women in malign or benevolent form retain their central power of metamorphosis" (38). Her divisional account of the characters Lilith, Eve, Lona, and Mara suggest a forced fragmentation of the Victorian woman. With Lona, I suggest, MacDonald explores the idea of a new form of Victorian womanhood. Connected with the idea of rebirth, Lona embodies aspects of both the angel in the house and the fallen woman, in a way that re-imagines femininity as a consolidation of aspects of both opposing ideals. Such shifts reflect the changes occurring at the end of century and MacDonald uses the gothic convention of the double to analyze and comment on these evolutions of identity.

These three chapters illustrate how the religious figures Lilith and Eve, in conjunction with the gothic double, complicate gendered constructions of the angel in the house and the fallen woman to reveal an overlap that unsettles these opposing binaries. Lilith and Eve are arguably the first western literary constructions of womanhood; using them to refigure feminine identity in the nineteenth century allows for a more complex analysis of all the texts. As a result, rather than the creation of new feminine ideals, a re-figuration or evolution of gender ideology can be formulated. In doing so, I provide a broad look at the altering state

of feminine identity and demonstrate how these texts by Coleridge, Rossetti, and MacDonald illuminate the ambivalence regarding gender ideals and religion throughout the nineteenth-century.

Chapter One

Samuel Taylor Coleridge's Feminized Religion: Gothic Religious Figures in "Christabel"

This chapter considers how the female characters in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "Christabel" (1816) both embody and confound contemporary representations of womanhood in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Coleridge's use of Eve and Lilith as feminine archetypes makes visible sexual and religious tensions in the characters Christabel and Geraldine. By the late-eighteenth century, cultural ideals were undergoing a process of rapid change. On the one hand, women were expected to conform to traditional gender roles: to be seen but not heard, meek, pure, and obedient. On the other, secularized ideas about gender related to Enlightenment thought challenged the authority of traditional gender ideals. In "Christabel," Coleridge negotiates eighteenth-century confusions about defining and containing increasingly conflicted feminine identity via the religious figures Lilith and Eve. The character Christabel seems at first glance to embody the submissive, innocent aspects of Eve, while Geraldine appears as a sexualized, threatening Lilith figure. As the poem progresses, however, the apparent distinctions between these two characters become increasingly blurred. In what follows, I argue that the female characters of the poem take up aspects of the religious figures Lilith and Eve, with assistance from the gothic, in order to depict fragmented feminine characteristics that had yet to be consolidated into a firm identity at the end of the Enlightenment, and thus symbolize the ambivalent state of eighteenth-century femininity.

"Christabel" is the story of an isolated girl on the cusp of womanhood. The poem begins as Christabel leaves her father's castle to pray for her "betroth'd Knight" (Coleridge,

line 28). When she enters a wooded area, a strange woman appears from behind a tree and introduces herself as the Lady Geraldine. Pleading for Christabel's assistance, Geraldine tells a story of her own abduction and escape and easily manipulates Christabel into helping her gain access to the castle. Once inside, Geraldine exerts her power, casting a spell over Christabel while she sleeps. When Geraldine is subsequently introduced to Christabel's father, Sir Leoline, she blinds him. Under the thrall of Geraldine's spell, Christabel is unable to warn her father of Geraldine's treachery. He casts Christabel aside and the poem ends in a fragmentary form with Christabel on the floor watching her father escort Geraldine from the room.

A substantial amount of "Christabel" scholarship focuses on Coleridge's biography, a psychoanalytic analysis, or an exploration of the poem's gothic themes. Norman Fruman, for example, argues that Coleridge's personal anxieties emerge in his writing, complicating his characters. Discussing "Christabel," Fruman suggests that Geraldine is not a completely "malevolent spirit," but rather is as much a "victim as [she is an] aggressor" (359). By contrast, critics such as Charles Rzepka and Michael Brennan explore subjectivity as a way to illustrate the expression of ambivalence in the poem. Rzepka offers a psychological reading of the poem that places Geraldine as Christabel's "alter ego" by speculating that Geraldine and Christabel together represent a split personality divided into "asexual and sexual, conscious and unconscious, articulate and unspeakable identities" (152). Rzepka sees Geraldine as a figure who enables Christabel to "embody, and thus make real for another, desires that [Christabel's] waking mind cannot accept" (156). Identifying Geraldine as a lamia figure, Brennan draws connections between the Jungian concept of the vengeful anima and the "disintegration of Gothic heroes and heroines… [whose] lack of wholeness

complicates interpretation" (42). Gothic criticism of Christabel has also focused on ambivalence, though it takes up this focus via a concern with broad social constructions of gender. Daniel Watkins, for example, reads Geraldine and Christabel as binary representations of women within "the disturbed social world of the poem" (65). He finds that the poem's "strong gothic sensibility" reflects a range "of larger concerns having to do with the underlying, and troubled, structures of the difficult physical and social world" (65). Though divergent in their methods, Fruman, Rzepka, and Brennan all identify a critical problem in the poem through their discussion of Coleridge's use of fragments, while Watkins uses the gothic to shift from psychological fragmentation in "Christabel" to the theme of the fragmented state of gender in the poem.

In making ambivalence about gender a central focus, much recent criticism has sidestepped questions about religion and religious symbolism. Those critics who do address religious symbolism have noticed the consonance between Christabel and Eve. William Ulmer, for example, argues that Christabel's encounter with Geraldine re-enacts the Fall from the book of Genesis, with the complicities of that encounter signifying the girl's subjection to "Original Sin" (380-81). Katherine Garvin goes further, drawing clear parallels between Christabel and Eve and between Geraldine and Lilith. Most notably, Garvin suggests that rather than representing two sides of a character, Christabel and Geraldine embody a mother/daughter connection. My specific interest here is to show how the characters in "Christabel" represent the overlap between religion and gender. In doing so, I position Geraldine and Christabel as depicting both positive and negative characteristics of womanhood through their connections to the symbolic figures Lilith and Eve, suggesting that the apparent distinctions between the two disintegrate over the course of the poem.

Ultimately, I argue that by incorporating aspects of the first women, Coleridge presents Christabel and Geraldine as demonstrating the flaws, strengths, and connections between each other, rather than just their apparent divisions. Before turning to my analysis of the poem, I will first situate Coleridge's poem within the broader currents of late eighteenth-century gender ideology.

Both Judaism and Christianity traditionally construct woman as subservient and inferior, and prior to the eighteenth century these religious approaches shaped social attitudes towards women. In the early-modern period the Book of Genesis, in particular, formulated a specific pattern for women's behaviour, promoting a particular emphasis on "hearty and cheerful submission" (Tadmor 16). Following the models of Adam and Eve, women were expected to "be subject to their husbands and fathers," and society accepted that male authority was supported by both "divine and natural law" (Crawford 1). Essentially, the ideal woman was chaste, obedient, and silent, and maintained the "appearance of godliness" (Laurence 3). By the seventeenth century, Anne Laurence suggests, the Bible was the central point of reference for most men and women "in all their thinking" (15). It was not until the Enlightenment period that attempts were made to re-evaluate and redefine traditional constructions of womanhood apart from religion. During the 1790s, M.H. Abrams argues, Romantic writers took the values associated with their "religious heritage and reconstitut[ed] them in a way that would make them intellectually acceptable, as well as emotionally pertinent" (Abrams 66). In doing so, however, there was no consensus on how these new responses to traditional values co-mingled with new ideas surrounding gender. As a result, much Enlightenment thinking about gender was uneven or divergent in its development. As Dorinda Outram suggests, the Enlightenment entertained a certain amount of flexibility in

exploring, defining, and redefining; as a result, the period witnessed a "series of problems and debates, of flash-points, [and] characteristics of the eighteenth century" (Outram 3).

Although always a major way of defining human identity, gender became a focal point during the Enlightenment period. One emerging medical view suggested that women were a separate species. Women were deemed to be closer to the natural world than men as a result of their biological makeup, which made them "emotional, credulous, and incapable of objective reasoning" (Outram 84). If women were viewed as entirely irrational, however, they could not be held responsible for any sin or unethical decision. There was thus a moral challenge to notions of femininity as inherently irrational. Seizing on this conflict, Romantic writers such as Mary Wollstonecraft identified the "many internal inconsistencies" regarding gender inherent in the Enlightenment's focus on reason and virtue (Outram 84). Wollstonecraft states rhetorically, "how can women be just or generous, when they are the slaves to injustice?"(189). As Anne Mellor points out, Wollstonecraft capitalizes on contradictory figurations of womanhood by claiming that if women were to be held accountable for both their moral and legal sins or crimes then they must also have "the mental capacity to think correctly and ethically" (Mellor 33). Thus, if women were viewed as beings able to make moral and ethical decisions, then the claim that they were irrational and soulless was also baseless. The result of such challenges, Outram notes, was a conflicted societal view of women. Some Enlightenment thinkers believed that women could have rights as human beings, while others maintained that they should be excluded from aspects of society outside the home (95). In their attempts to re-define traditional constructions of womanhood, moreover, Enlightenment thinkers invoked earlier religious symbolism, such as the easily manipulated Eve, to justify man's control over female behaviour. In doing so, they

complicated traditional iconography, creating a new set of oppositional characteristics associated with women that referenced, but did not completely reproduce, older ideologies. While the emphasis on chastity, obedience, silence, and godliness shifted during the Enlightenment, then, it did not disappear entirely. Instead, old and new concepts of femininity overlapped, exposing tensions between competing belief systems.

While some Enlightenment thinkers tried to reject religious influence in their formulations of how the world functioned, religion nonetheless remained an important part of eighteenth-century society. Though not explicitly mentioned in many radical texts and contexts, religion was still a dominant authority in mainstream society. In what follows, I argue that "Christabel" illustrates the tensions pertaining to socially constructed notions of femininity that were beginning to emerge at the end of the eighteenth century. The clash of Enlightenment and traditional views of gender are particularly evident in gothic literature that invokes religious images of Lilith and Eve. While not the primary focus of this analysis, the gothic is formally central to Coleridge's text and provides the textual conventions that connect religious ideology and sexuality in the female characters. In "Christabel," Coleridge's use of the Lilith/Eve typology is focused via the gothic conventions of the double. Traditionally, Lilith is said to be Adam's equal, his independent and uncontrollable first wife. Eve, by contrast, is regarded as Adam's subservient and naïve wife. In "Christabel," Coleridge's use of doubling realigns these associations. Rather than formulating an opposition between Lilith and Eve, predicated on the binary opposition between good and evil, Coleridge incorporates aspects of Lilith and Eve in both women. If Lilith is still demonized, she is also connected with the search for independence and autonomy that Wollstonecraft seemed to espouse. Similarly, Eve suggests the need to retain

the religious morality and virtue dictated by the period. Coleridge's use of the gothic double thus offers a reflection of two sides of each character, allowing for multiple avenues of mobility between Christabel and Geraldine: between sexuality and religious ideology, between contemporary oppositions of rationality and emotion, and between the symbolic representations of Lilith and Eve.

The first meeting of Christabel and Geraldine is reminiscent of the meeting between the serpent and Eve from Genesis. Like the serpent who appeared to Eve from the boughs of the Tree of Knowledge, Geraldine appears suddenly from behind the "the huge, broad-breasted, old oak tree" (Coleridge, line 42). The Romantics were quite conversant with the serpent myth and often used it as a religious device to symbolize demonic sexual power in relation to the feminine. In effect, Geraldine's connection to the serpent supports the reading of Christabel as a symbolic Eve. In Genesis, Eve is easily convinced by the serpent to eat the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, which causes her fall. Eve's naiveté is mirrored by Christabel's gullibility in hearing Geraldine's story:

> "Five warriors seized me yestermorn,
> Me, even me, a maid forlorn:
> They choked my cries with force and fright,
> And tied me on a palfrey white." (lines 81-4)

Christabel then instigates her own fall by inviting Geraldine into her home: "O well, bright dame! May you command / The service of Sir Leoline" (lines 106-7). Not only does Christabel provide verbal permission for the "snake" to enter her home but Christabel also facilitates Geraldine's physical entrance as well: "[a]nd Christabel with might and main / Lifted her up, a weary weight, / Over the threshold of the gate" (lines 130-2). Christabel's

position as an Eve figure thus leaves Geraldine to inhabit the Lilith associations within the poem.

The reader is first introduced to Geraldine in the sixth stanza of the poem as an almost ethereal figure: a "damsel bright, / Drest in silken robe of white" (Coleridge, lines 58-9). Rather than depict Geraldine in dark clothing and with a malevolent demeanor, Coleridge uses imagery more often associated with purity and innocence. To the reader, Geraldine's true purpose is thus masked by her white robe, which Coleridge contrasts with Christabel's cloak (line 55). Coleridge's use of light and dark imagery to reverse expectations of good and bad both invokes and reverses assumptions central to the gothic genre. This effect is heightened by his initial description of Geraldine as a victim, "[a] weary woman, scarce alive" (line 95), and then by his framing of her as helpless: "[s]tretch forth thy hand (thus ended she), / And help a wretched maid to flee (lines 102-3). Similarly, while Christabel would normally be understood as innocence personified, Coleridge upsets this expectation by emphasizing her suspicious behaviour as she "stole along" from the castle. Rather than just reverse usual assumptions about good and evil, Coleridge introduces questions about the oppositions between light and dark, good and evil. By placing Christabel as the darker figure who represents innocence and Geraldine as the lighter figure representing a mature and darker personality, Coleridge makes the characters' actions determine their natures rather than just their appearances. Christabel and Geraldine's characters are complicated further insofar as they invoke associations with Lilith and Eve.

Since the majority of "Christabel" scholarship focuses on Geraldine's associations with the serpent, the connection between Geraldine and Lilith is often neglected. The serpent in mythology often carries feminine connotations and this mixture of the feminine and the

snake is represented via a lamia figure—half woman, half snake. Lamia has a history that precedes works such as Keats' "Lamia." According to Jewish legend, Lilith, the first woman, is often considered a lamia figure, half woman and either part owl or part snake. Because Geraldine can be connected to the snake and thus to a lamia type of symbol, she can also be linked to Lilith. As Hurwitz notes, Lilith was "regarded as a goddess or demon of the night" (53), which is suggested by Geraldine's appearance to Christabel during the night in her "exceedingly" (line 68) beautiful visage. Most Lilith iconographies also place Lilith in wooded areas. Geraldine appears to Christabel from behind a "huge old oak," which, according to Michael Ferber, is a tree associated with pagan symbolism and masculinity (142). If there is greenery covering a tree, whether it be poison ivy, which was common, or the "rarest mistletoe," as indicated in "Christabel," the vegetation is associated with the feminine (Coleridge, Line 34). Mistletoe, in particular, looks beautiful and harmless but is in fact poisonous, and in "Christabel" this greenery suggests a correspondence between a poisonous weed and women. Another characteristic of mistletoe is that it can spread quickly and smother or kill objects it encompasses. Considering that in the poem mistletoe covers an oak tree—a known masculine/phallic symbol—it offers an image of the unpredictable and uncontrollable feminine infecting or tainting man. The image of the oak entangled with the mistletoe foreshadows the appearance of Geraldine and her parasitic relationship with Sir Leoline.

After Geraldine appears to Christabel, she reveals more of her true nature. She begins to manipulate Christabel with a story of her supposed abduction. Christabel's naiveté is suggested when she "stretched forth her hand, / And comforted fair Geraldine" (Coleridge, lines 104-5). Christabel's inability to read Geraldine's face mirrors Eve's naiveté in Genesis.

Instead of tempting Christabel with "Knowledge," Geraldine exploits Christabel's innocent nature in order to gain control over her. Through her story of abduction, Geraldine is able to portray herself as an innocent victim. In much the same way, the snake in Genesis tempts Eve by first creating a non-threatening atmosphere and then using Eve's ignorance of evil against her. Geraldine in a sense slithers her way into the castle to taint the innocent Christabel. As a result, Geraldine appears as a temptress snake whose "Knowledge" and experience taint the castle and its occupants when she enters it.

The transition from the natural setting in the forest to the castle is important because it symbolizes the transfer of power between Geraldine and Christabel. Geraldine does not appear to be in control at the beginning of the second part of the poem: she requires Christabel's assistance getting across the moat and into the castle. However, just as the serpent is able to convince Eve to take and eat the apple and then present it to Adam, Geraldine is able to convince Christabel to take her inside the castle. Christabel's compliance with Geraldine's plea is demonstrated when she offers her father's power: "[b]right dame! May you command / The service of Sir Leoline" (Coleridge, lines 106-7). Once Christabel makes the decision to help Geraldine, however, she begins to lose control. At first, Geraldine convinces Christabel "with might and main" to "[l]i[ft] her up, a weary weight" and carry her across the threshold (lines 130-34). Once inside the castle, Geraldine becomes more active, while Christabel becomes more demure. Once "[o]ver the threshold of the gate" the "lady rose again, / And moved, as she were not in pain;" here Geraldine is exhibiting a vampire-like characteristic where she must be invited before she can enter a dwelling (lines 132-34). The reader's suspicion that there is more to Geraldine than meets the eye is confirmed when they enter Christabel's bedchamber. It appears that Geraldine sees apparitions, and she

speaks to Christabel's dead mother. Geraldine sees Christabel's mother as a threat; she yells out, "'[o]ff wandering mother! Peak and pine/I have power to bid thee flee'" (lines 205-6). These lines, along with Geraldine's claim in the following stanza that "'[t]his hour is [hers],'" foreshadows her evil intent (line 211). The idea that Geraldine is stealing Christabel away from her mother correlates with one of the fearful roles that Lilith embodies. In many Jewish myths, Lilith was known for stealing children as well as for seduction, while Lamia figures often appear as "child-stealing, blood-sucking beings" (Hurwitz 46). Geraldine personifies this aspect of Lamia but she is also sexually seductive, enchanting Sir Leoline later in the poem.

Geraldine's position as a Lilith/lamia figure suggests that her role in the poem is intended to be simply the evil interloper intent on destroying Christabel. However, as the poem progresses and Geraldine casts her spell over Christabel, she is not without feeling. The reference to Geraldine's "shame" and "sorrow" while casting her spell over Christabel reveals that while the act she performs is negative, the feeling behind it is almost remorseful. The fact that Geraldine exhibits remorse indicates that she is not wholly evil. Lilith was not intrinsically evil either, but instead was demonized because of her strong-willed nature. Hurwitz states that Lilith has also been referred to as the "Great Female, [who] encompasses both the mother and [inner persona]," which is of interest here given the allegorical doubling Coleridge presents (Hurwitz 216). As an archetypal female figure, moreover, Lilith may be read as the inner mother of every woman, contained within the unconscious, waiting to be released. Hurwitz explains:

> Lilith being of the same sex and thus more of a shadow figure of the woman concerned [is the] Great Mother divided into the good, caring, nurturing mother and

> the terrifying, devouring mother, or the [inner self] into the seductive [inner self] and the inspirational [inner self]. (219)

Geraldine seems to move between the extremes of caring mother and terrifying seductive woman in stanzas twenty-five and twenty-six. She undresses and lies down beside a naked Christabel, holding her in an apparently restrained embrace and as she "...holds the maiden in her arms," Christabel "[s]eems to slumber still and mild..." (lines 263, 299-300). The image of Geraldine holding Christabel "[a]s a mother with her child" creates a comforting image rather than a terrifying one (lines 301). The rhymed link of "still and mild" with "as mother with child" suggests a protective hold that raises questions about her position as a mother or as a threat. The use of "shield" in reference to Christabel occurs numerous times: "Jesu, Maria, shield her well ...O shield her! shield sweet Christabel! ... To shield her and shelter her from the damp air. ... Jesu, Maria, shield her well!" (lines 54, 254, 278, 584). It is not clear if it is Geraldine that the speaker is referring to or some other force. Ultimately, by embodying the experienced mother figure, Geraldine is creating the path to further Christabel's realization of her desire. Geraldine and Christabel's mother/daughter connection to the figures of Lilith and Eve is an important method for unsettling the reader's expectations, but it is not the only one, however. The gothic double also helps further break down the confusion surrounding eighteenth-century femininity.

The female characters in "Christabel" exemplify the anxieties and conflicts central to eighteenth-century female identity. By situating Christabel and Geraldine as doubles, Coleridge is depicting the double-sided nature of femininity, the contradictions by which women were expected to be chaste and still evoke sexual desire in men. Therefore, in order for Christabel to mature, in effect, Geraldine is necessary as a doubling presence. Christabel's

innocent childlike persona must be disconnected from her sexual impulses so that her desire can remain within the borders of propriety instilled by patriarchal society. As a figure of sexual repression, Christabel operates within the dialogue that was developing during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries about the existence of hidden desire. Enlightenment thinkers believed that repressed sexuality "reproduces the distinction between essential human nature and the aspects of individual identity that have been imposed upon us by culture" (Armstrong 12). Here, "essential human nature" refers to those impulses that are biologically determined, not culturally created. As a result, Ulmer suggests, the poem becomes a discussion about "Christabel's attitudes toward her own sexual being" rather than a conflict between "hapless innocence and supernatural evil" (379). Women were not supposed to have sexual desires, so in addition to Geraldine's own feelings of shame and sorrow, Christabel will come to understand and recognize her own sexual feelings via Geraldine.

As the Lilith figure in the poem, Geraldine offers two ways of viewing mature femininity. One way is by interpreting Geraldine's character as that of a mature opportunist preying on Christabel's vulnerability. The other supports a reading of Geraldine as a suppressed aspect of Christabel's own emerging sexuality in the form of a doppelgänger. The act of possession is demonstrated after Christabel and Geraldine have their encounter in Christabel's bedchamber. Geraldine

> With low voice and doleful look
>
> These words did say:
>
> In the touch of this bosom there worketh a spell,
>
> Which is lord of thy utterance, Christabel!

Thou knowest to-night, and wilt know to-morrow,

This mark of my shame, this seal of my sorrow. (lines 265-70)

Geraldine and Christabel's intimate interaction in the bedroom scene supports the reading of the two women as a gothic doubling, where Geraldine is a repressed aspect of Christabel that has begun to emerge against Christabel's conscious wishes. The use of the double is best illustrated when Christabel falls asleep beside Geraldine and Geraldine uses the opportunity to cast a spell over her. The fact that Christabel feels that something has occurred while she was sleeping, "[w]ith such perplexity of mind / As dreams too lively leave behind," suggests that at least at an unconscious level they are connected to each other (lines 385-6). The result of this physical encounter is that the naive innocence that Christabel supposedly represents emerges as a sexualized double symbolized by Geraldine. While not the focus of this study, it should be mentioned that the homoerotic undertone of the chamber scene is a widely studied aspect of the poem. For instance, Andrew Elfenbein suggests that "the unveiled female body acquires a special allure in an all-female context... [L]esbianism remains just beneath the surface" (185). Therefore, while sexual connotations between Christabel and Geraldine within the scene are prevalent and it is important to acknowledge them, it will not be an aspect of exploration in this thesis. With that said, as Christabel's doppelgänger, Geraldine offers a form of integration. "Sleeping" in this poem then takes on both a figurative and literal meaning, since both the persona of Christabel and her physical body are dormant. Coleridge does not specifically state that Christabel is asleep, but her lack of awareness of Geraldine's actions and her position on the "bed" suggest a form of unconsciousness. Viewing the characters through the doubling motif is an example of psychic disintegration where the consciousness "fail[s] to recognize, distinguish, and then assimilate the splintered

parts of the Self; the conscious mind itself loses its integrity, its boundaries, and collapses into the undifferentiated abyss of the dark unconscious" (Brennan 6). Ultimately, Christabel herself suggests that in submitting to Geraldine's commands, she is not completely innocent: "'[s]ure I have sinn'd!' said Christabel" (line 381). As a result, Christabel's eyes are gradually being opened to her emerging sexuality, but her inability to accept it and integrate it allows Geraldine to maintain power over her as her double.

As Christabel's double, Geraldine uses her difference, with some supernatural aid, to gain and keep control by adapting characteristics of Lilith when her eyes "[e]ach shrunk up to a serpent's eye" (Coleridge, line 587). She is able to do this without stepping outside her gendered role or exhibiting particularly male characteristics because, as the sexualized woman or demonic figure of the text, Geraldine is not bound by the same restrictions as Christabel is by her innocence. In addition, due to her mobility, Geraldine is able to imitate innocence and manipulate Sir Leoline into seeing what he wants to see: "Geraldine in maiden wise / Casting down her large bright eyes, / With blushing cheek and courtesy fine" (lines 575-77). By engaging with Geraldine, Christabel gains sexual knowledge and experience: "[w]hile in the lady's arms she lay, / Had put a rapture in her breast" (lines 466-7). Christabel's experience parallels the Genesis story, where Eve's eyes are "opened" to the world around her and she understands the meaning and shame of being naked; in other words, her ignorance is lifted. Much like Eve, Christabel is only given the chance to speak once in her defense when she asks her father to "send away" Geraldine (line 617). Eve was also able to explain to God that she was "beguiled" by the serpent, but was still punished. Like God, Sir Leoline feels "dishonored by his only child" and punishes his daughter for the transgressions made by another (642).

While Christabel's eyes are opened to the knowledge of Geraldine's actions, Sir Leoline prefers to remain ignorant of Geraldine's spell. Anne Mellor points out that, as a symbolical figure for eighteenth-century man, Sir Leoline embodies the "social role of the master" becoming arrogant and losing his ability to "act justly, compassionately, [or] to be [a] good leade[r]" (Mellor 37) . Therefore, Geraldine unsettles the gender dynamics as well as manipulates Leoline into doing what she wants. In addition, she accomplishes this feat in such a way that Leoline does not see through her actions; instead he provides "all his hospitality / To the wronged daughter of his friend," thinking he is bestowing a noble service (Coleridge, Lines 646-7). As a result, Geraldine causes Sir Leoline to "tur[n] from his own sweet maid" and choose her instead: he "[l]ed forth the lady Geraldine," while Christabel watches her father literally and figuratively leave her behind (lines 655, 657). Auerbach argues that the "association of women with monstrosity, or with that which is conscious but not human, is both a stigma ... and a celebration of female powers of metamorphosis" (65). Christabel is clearly more complex than she appears at the beginning of the poem, and it is through her connections and interactions with Geraldine as her double that the reader is able to dissect how the different aspects of her character disrupt attempts to create fixed oppositions in defining eighteenth-century feminine identity.

The image of the entwined dove and snake is a religious symbol that expresses Christabel and Geraldine's entanglement. The religious image of the symbols of the snake and the dove reflects the connections between the gothic and religion. The symbolism is conveyed through a dream of one of Sir Leoline's subjects, Bracy the bard, who appears near the beginning of part two of the poem. While Bracy's dream is significant, his character is very much peripheral to the text. In Bracy's dream, the snake and the dove appear together

but they do not convey what the reader might expect. In stanzas fifty-one and fifty-two, Bracy tells Sir Leoline about his vision and says that the dove is one "[w]hom [Sir Leoline] dost love / And call by thy own daughter's name," suggesting but not directly stating who he is referring to (lines 534-35). Bracy's mention of Leoline's "daughter's name" leads the reader to think that the dove represents Christabel and therefore that the snake must represent Geraldine. In stanza fifty-four, however, this expectation is reversed when Sir Leoline refers to Geraldine as "Roland's beauteous dove" (lines 571, 573). For Sir Leoline, Christabel is associated with the snake that he has vowed to crush. This leaves the reader to assume that Sir Leoline has repositioned Geraldine—the sexualized female of the poem—above his innocent daughter Christabel. As Sir Leoline represents the patriarch in the poem, the social implications of his actions suggest that he cannot determine or interpret feminine behaviour: he cannot see Geraldine's seduction as a form of manipulation nor does he believe the reasoning behind Christabel's plea for him to "send [Geraldine] away" (line 619). The latter is more significant as Christabel only wants to protect her father and has his best interests at heart. That Sir Leoline considers Christabel's behaviour an act of "more than woman's jealousy" demonstrates how blind he is to what is going on in front of him (line 648).

Ultimately, "Christabel" expresses the struggle between the modesty that was expected and the sexual teasing that was encouraged. Christabel's expressions of shame for sexual actions and references to praying are constant throughout the text: "...in silence prayeth she ... lowly tones she prayed ... praying at the old oak tree ... having prayed" (lines 36, 481, 281, 388). By contrast, while Geraldine is never overtly sexual, she does just enough to garner the attention of Sir Leoline and keep it. Sir Leoline's rejection of his honest daughter Christabel for the manipulative interloper Geraldine is indicative of the conflicting

ideals that a patriarchal society placed upon women, with men saying one thing and wanting another. When read with this idea in mind, "Christabel" seems like an attempt to explore the differing ideals of female identity, when opposing ideals could not be reconciled. The end of the poem, while fragmented, is also ironic; Christabel's modest innocence is apparently sacrificed for Geraldine's sexually mature nature. Even though the reader assumes that Christabel is left behind, Coleridge does not tell us what happens to her or Geraldine. All the reader is left with is the vision of Christabel on the floor watching as Geraldine is escorted away by the besotted Sir Leoline.

The poem ends without completing the story of Christabel and Geraldine. Instead, Coleridge adds a stanza that is disconnected from the rest of the text and contains no direct mention of the previously established characters, though the little child might be Christabel. This final stanza offers a very general description of a child's transition from innocence to experience:

> A little child, a limber elf, /.../
> Makes such a vision to the sight
> As fills a father's eyes with light;
> And pleasures flow in so thick and fast
> Must needs express his love's excess
> With words of unmeant bitterness.
> Perhaps 'tis pretty to force together
> Thoughts so all unlike each other;
> To mutter and mock a broken charm (lines 658, 662-7, 669-70)

It is unclear whether this stanza is conveying the father's resentment of the child's innocence or if he resents the fact that the child cannot stay in a state of innocence. What is clear is that the "father's" verbal response "to mutter and mock" his child is in complete contrast with what he is feeling: "[a]nd pleasures flow in so thick and fast / Must needs express his love's excess" (lines 670, 664-5). Ultimately, this stanza does not help conclude the story told in the previous body of the poem; instead, it comes across as disjointed from the rest of poem, leaving the reader with more questions than answers. The reader does not learn what happened to Christabel or to Sir Leoline and Geraldine after they leave the hall. The loose ends left at the end of the poem mirror the unsettled state of eighteenth-century femininity at the end of the Enlightenment. Geraldine, as the representative of the undesirable traits of womanhood, has seemingly overtaken Christabel, who symbolizes the more pleasing characteristics of eighteenth-century femininity. Thus, it leaves the reader wondering what constitutes idealized womanhood at the end of Enlightenment, or at the very least, what it constitutes in Coleridge's work at the time.

In conclusion, the conflicting ideas and definitions concerning both Geraldine and Christabel's sexual and feminine identities are not resolved. By adapting aspects of Lilith and Eve to the characters, as Christabel and Geraldine then become glimpses of undefined feminine identity, a broader perspective of the poem emerges. Coleridge's poem in general suggests that sexual desire needs to be tempered by reason but not extinguished by it. Thus, an inner struggle takes place within Christabel's Eve and Geraldine's Lilith that demonstrates the inconsistencies surrounding femininity at that time. In addition, the gothic double helps reveal these inconsistencies so that the reader can see the characters struggle through the competing feminine figurations of the rationally repressed woman, the childlike woman, and

the overly emotional woman that were normative at the end of the century. In turn, Eve and Lilith illustrate how Geraldine, Christabel, and eighteenth-century women are neither wholly innocent nor wholly tainted, but rather composed of fragments that form these ideals.

Chapter Two

Christina Rossetti's "Goblin Market:" Eve, Lilith, and Re-imagined Nineteenth-Century Feminine Identity

This chapter considers how the two central female characters in Christina Rossetti's "Goblin Market" (1862) reconfigure ideas about the angel in the house and the fallen woman. Through the early years of the nineteenth century, men went from seeing women as the errant part of man to idolized emblems of domestic bliss. By the middle of the century, the idealization of the domestic angel left little room for feminine identity to deviate from the binary definitions of womanhood. Religious and secular institutions that determined social behaviour in the Victorian period emphasized women's moral obligation to curb the sexual promiscuity of men. Domestic women therefore came to be regarded as mother and angel all wrapped into one package. What was left for those who did not fit into this strict image was identification as a fallen woman. In "Goblin Market," the sisters Laura and Lizzie are initially positioned to represent these binary formulations of womanhood. Rossetti's Lizzie is the virtuous woman who does anything to save her sinful sister, even at the risk of her own soul. Laura, on the other hand, shows how easily women can fall. If these characters seem to reflect these distinct binaries, however, Rossetti complicates the normative opposition by utilizing aspects of the first female archetypes—Lilith and Eve—to create connections between the sisters rather than divisions. Therefore, I argue that Rossetti's sisters incorporate nuances of the religious figurations of Lilith and Eve to represent how the binaries of the angel in the house and the fallen woman are interconnected rather than completely separate distinctions of nineteenth-century feminine identity.

"Goblin Market" is a poem about Laura and Lizzie, two sisters tempted by "goblin men" who try to seduce them with the cries of "come buy, come buy" and the promise of sweet fruit. Not listening to her sister's warnings, Laura eats the fruit and is possessed by the goblin men. Subsequently, though she requires their fruit, she is unable to hear their cries and falls ill. To save her sister, Lizzie decides to risk herself by leaving the safety of her home and going to purchase some fruit from the goblin men. In a scene reminiscent of rape, Lizzie resists the goblin men as they attempt to force her to consume the enchanted fruit. She returns to her sister, who then licks the juices from Lizzie's face and neck and is healed. The poem ends with a domestic tableau featuring Laura, Lizzie, and their children, all of whom affirm the value of a sister's love.

Most Rossetti scholarship deals with biography, gender, and religious analysis, with specific attention to the religious figures of Eve and Christ. Mary Arseneau and Angela Leighton, for example, both discuss the significance of Rossetti's biography in her writing. Arseneau emphasizes that "[t]he importance of Rossetti's faith for her life and art can hardly be overstated. More than half of her poetic output is devotional, and the works of her later years in both poetry and prose are almost exclusively so" (Arseneau 6). Similarly, Leighton looks at Rossetti's religious interests and social sympathies, questioning whether Rossetti's "domestic devotion and religious fervor [was a] public façade…behind which her imagination had plenty of room to play" (Leighton 129). Taken together, such arguments situate Rossetti's unsettled relationship to binary oppositions concerning religion and feminine identity.

Other dimensions of Rossetti's religious attitudes are explored by Cynthia Scheinberg, Diane D'Amico, Lynda Palazzo, and Virginia Sickbert. Scheinberg is one of the

few scholars to connect Rossetti's texts, specifically "Goblin Market," to Judaism, rather than limiting her reading to the more common Christian view. While no allusions are made to Lilith, linking the Judaic goblins to an understanding of difference and otherness, she argues, helped Rossetti construct a "complex notion of female identity" (109). Representations of Eve and Christ in Rossetti's poetry are the subject of D'Amico's writing, but her emphasis on Eve's role as the "beloved mother" situates her in direct opposition to more misogynistic representations of womanhood in the nineteenth century. With that said, her argument does not fully account for divided femininity; instead, it shifts to a masculine valence that focuses on flaws of Eve and the redeeming powers of the masculine figure of Christ. In her discussion of "Goblin Market," for instance, D'Amico reads "Lizzie's sisterly sacrifice in masculine terms" (67). Lynda Palazzo takes up a different position, exploring how Laura and Lizzie reflect aspects of nineteenth-century femininity. Palazzo claims that Laura's fall resonates with the fall of Eve; as she suggests, "Rossetti has radically rewritten the fall of Eve in the terms of the social and spiritual abuse of women which she sees around her, and includes more than a hint that male gender oppression be interpreted as original sin" (27). In regard to Lizzie, she suggests that Rossetti re-images Christ through Lizzie's actions, identifying Lizzie as a "manifestation of those aspects of the redeemer which are directly needed in the salvation of Laura" (28). Ultimately, both D'Amico's and Palazzo's reconfigurations of the divided feminine nature via Christ and Eve emphasize aspects of martyrdom and naiveté associated with those religious figures. Finally, Virginia Sickbert's useful discussion of Rossetti's response to Eve concedes that Rossetti did not excuse Eve from all wrongdoing. She also finds that Rossetti argued that "men, not women brought sin into the world" (295). Though all provide various insights and parallels into the Eve and

Christ myths within the poem, none of these scholars take up representations of Lilith in the text. I argue that the symbolic representations of these aspects in "Goblin Market" emphasize relationships between Laura and Lizzie that have been a neglected area of analysis and offer a critique of gender roles in Victorian society.

By the mid-nineteenth century, Christianity dominated—or permeated—almost every aspect of Victorian society, particularly the domestic sphere. By the 1830s and 1840s, John Maynard suggests, the Christian tradition began to conceive of women "as capable of sexlessness (but also as incapable of passionate sex without corruption)" (35). Thanks in part to Coventry Patmore's "Angel in the House," published in 1854, this new idealization began to take root in popular imagination. In popular culture, the sexual potential of women instilled fear in a Victorian society caught in the middle of social upheaval. As Palazzo notes, the threat was contained by identifying women as passive domestic angels or as nuns in opposition to vilified fallen women (16). Prostitutes were thus demonized in symbolic terms and ravaged by laws that denied their basic human rights.

For the most part, Rossetti publically accepted the role women had been given in Victorian society. Privately, however, she was very critical of their forced subordination and sympathetic to the troubles the fallen endured. In 1859 she joined a charitable institution—St. Mary Magdalene Penitentiary in Highgate—dedicated to reclaiming fallen women. At Highgate, Rossetti was known as "Sister Christina" and adopted nun-like characteristics. Her time spent at Highgate would come to be very important as it served as inspiration for "Goblin Market," which became one of her most popular works. Rossetti uses the sisters in "Goblin Market" to suggest a link or symbolic kinship that connects all women. This "sisterhood" ties the fallen woman and the angel of the house together rather than positioning

them as opposing figures. The link of sisterhood creates a stronger basis for the Lilith and Eve symbolism as it connects them as kin rather than conflicting appropriations of womanhood.

The religious figure of Lilith as the demonic seductress often embodies many, if not all, the aspects of the fallen woman. However, in Rossetti's poem, Laura—the conceptual Lilith figure—falls, but through Lizzie she finds the strength to redeem herself. The sister dynamic reveals a type of Lilith that is both the sympathetic fallen woman and the redeemer. For all of Lilith's sexual and immoral associations, she also embodies strength and independence. While these traits are often overlooked in favour of an emphasis on her demonic characteristics, they are still embedded in her nature and are aspects that are not a part of the Eve figuration. The religious figure of Eve is normally viewed as either the first mother or the cause of the fall of mankind. When compared with Lilith within a binary register of gender identity, however, Eve often comes across as the angel to Lilith's demon. In "Goblin Market" Laura and Lizzie share aspects of both these religious figures, a commonality that disrupts the Victorian opposition between the angel in the house and the fallen woman. Focusing on continuity rather than division, Rossetti uses her fallen figures to question assumptions about the schism between fallen women and domestic angels.

In "Goblin Market," Rossetti uses the gothic to create a link between fallenness and salvation. The language that Rossetti uses in "Goblin Market" complicates a text that at first reading seems to be a children's story, but her use of the poetic fantastic contributes to the gothic effect of destabilizing set gender roles. Jackson says that the use of the gothic within fantasy to unsettle and "shatter boundary lines" has been linked to "cultural repression and its generation of oppositional energies" (Jackson 179). In *The Fantastic: a Structural Approach*

to a Literary Genre, Tzvetan Todorov explains that "the fantastic is that hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event" (25). In addition, Harris argues that Todorov,

> positions the fantastic between the genres of *the marvelous* (the truly supernatural) and *the uncanny* (bizarre events which are ultimately explainable by recourse to existing laws of nature—not to be confused with the standard definition that denotes events or people that are disquieting and mysterious, perhaps even supernatural). (Harris 17-8)

It is therefore not surprising that many nineteenth-century female authors, including Rossetti, took up the fantastic to "subvert patriarchal society" (Jackson 104). Insofar as it works against fixed cultural norms, Jackson suggests that the fantastic uses "deconstructed, demolished, or divided selves" to give "graphic depictions of subjects in process, suggesting possibilities of innumerable other selves" (179). Harris, in turn, argues that "[t]he gothic atmosphere is the emotional and aesthetic response to the 'fantastic'" (20). Elizabeth MacAndrew explains more explicitly in *The Gothic Tradition in Fiction* that,

> Gothic fiction....gives form to amorphous fears and impulses....some torn from the author's subconscious mind and some the stuff of myth, folklore, fairy tale, and romance....The purpose of gothic fiction....[was] to arouse.... 'sympathy,' as the aesthetics of Sensibility demanded, by evoking pity and fear; and to explore the mind of the man....so that evil might be avoided. (3-4).

Ultimately, both modes often work in relation with one another, suggesting that "motifs drawn from folklore provid[e] a symbolic matrix for tying moral instructions to psychological impressions" (Harris 20). In "Goblin Market," the use of the first women to

navigate the oppositional structure that the sisters seemingly represent offers a way to question the often antagonistic positioning of the angelic and fallen woman ideals. By incorporating aspects of Lilith and Eve into the two sisters, Rossetti demonstrates how they can complement each other, suggesting that difference does not have to be adversarial; rather their difference indicates that Laura and Lizzie act as doubles of each other, as parts of each other. By using the gothic double to represent oppositional characteristics within the sisters, Rossetti offers an alternative view of women as neither uncompromising angels nor unredeemable fallen women; rather, they are unified under the title of woman.

Early in the poem, Laura seems to represent the sexual and animalistic perception of nineteenth-century women when she loses control of her inhibitions after she has eaten the fruit of the goblin men. By contrast, Lizzie represents the domestic angel as she pleads with her sister to ignore the goblin men for "[t]heir evil gifts would harm [them]" (Rossetti, line 66). Despite their apparent opposition, however, Laura and Lizzie's literal and symbolic kinship connects them both to each other and to Lilith and Eve. As sisters, they share similar physical attributes and familial loyalty, and, as figures of Lilith and Eve, they are similarly related in ways that trouble binary notions of good and evil. References to"[t]wilight" associate Lizzie with Lilith, who Hurwitz notes is a "goddess of the night" and a "shadow figure" (Hurwitz 219). Lizzie's warning about the perils of "loitering" is also significant as it suggests that by leaving the home and lingering in the company of "goblin men" she will be perceived as fallen. By contrast, Laura embodies both Lilith's rebellious attitude and Eve's naiveté when she ignores her sister's plea that she "'[s]hould not loiter in the glen / In the haunts of goblin men'" (Rossetti, lines 145-6). Laura and Lizzie, by adapting both positive and negative characteristics from both religious figures, strengthen their bond as sisters.

Playing further with this idea of kinship, Rossetti connects more aspects of the religious figures of Lilith and Eve with her characters Laura and Lizzie. As a symbolic representation of Eve, for example, Laura is innocent and naïve; yet she is also fallen and co-dependent. Similarly, Lizzie manifests Lilith's strength and redeeming power. Like Lilith, Lizzie leaves the boundaries of her home and is isolated from humanity. From the Victorian viewpoint her behaviour makes her fallen. In the context of the poem, however, after she leaves the boundaries of the home she does not become the traditional fallen woman, even after her interaction with the goblin men. Lizzie crosses the domestic boundary to save her sister, a move that aligns her with Lilith's strength to disobey patriarchal authority. Her unwillingness to submit and her strength erode both the ideal of the fallen woman and that of the angel of the house, as she is neither completely fallen nor completely innocent. The twilight setting is also symbolic of this state of limbo; as it is not completely night nor is it completely light. Instead, twilight creates its own boundary between light and dark, which is where both Laura and Lizzie reside, between the angelic and fallen woman binary terms. By leaving the boundaries of the house, Laura is positioned as the fallen figure in the poem, encompassing Lilith's impulsiveness and Eve's weak nature. She is mentioned first in her role as protector, as she tells Lizzie to stay close to her while warning her about the goblin men: "[c]rouching close together … 'Lie close,' Laura said, … 'We must not look at goblin men, / We must not buy their fruit / Who knows upon what soil they fed'" (Rossetti, lines 36, 40, 42-4). The seemingly maternal warning is intended to protect her sister, but she does not heed her own advice. In addition, the subtext contained in the line "[w]ho knows upon what soil they fed" is arguably a direct comment on the promiscuity of Victorian men and their role in spread of venereal disease, which was running rampant throughout the period (44).

Like negative patriarchal views of the figurations of Lilith and Eve, Laura is easily seduced and highly sexualized. However, in the poem, Laura is painted as sympathetic and redeemable, rather than as an object of the typical negative patriarchal view. By imbuing the goblin men with a voice that sounds like a "voice of doves" when they are trying to seduce Laura, Rossetti turns the traditional characteristics associated with the dove—purity, innocence, and freedom—into a lure, causing Laura's fall. Thus, in Rossetti's poem, the dove-like voice is associated with seduction, which leads to sin, for after Laura hears the voice, her "last restraint is gone," and with her control gone, "[s]he sucked and sucked and sucked" all the forbidden fruit offered to her by the goblin men (Rossetti, lines 77, 86, 134).

The dove-like voice Rossetti gives the goblin men to seduce Laura allows them to hide behind an illusion of innocence, cooing and whispering, "come buy, come buy" (line 81). Much as Adam blamed Lilith, without accepting his own culpability for his role in Lilith's departure from Eden— a departure that stemmed from Adam's inability to acknowledge their equality—the goblin men similarly feign ignorance about their role in causing Laura's—and Lizzie's—fall. The use of the word "dove" in this poem thus challenges patriarchal notions of innocence. Indeed, given the fact that the only demonic and unredeemable figures in the poem are male, Rossetti offers an alternative view of Victorian men, implicating them in the victimization of women. Subsequently, Rossetti's characterization of Laura unsettles negative perceptions of the fallen woman by making her sympathetic rather than irredeemable. Laura symbolizes an aspect of Eve when she does not listen to her sister's warning about taking fruit from the goblin men. Lizzie pleads with her sister, noting "their evil gifts would harm" (Rossetti, line 66). These lines mirror God's warning to Adam and Eve to not eat from the tree of knowledge. Indeed, there is an allusion

to the tree of knowledge of good and evil and its tie to mortality in "Goblin Market." Laura is seduced by the cries of the goblin men, and when offered the fruit she naively consumes it, just like Eve, who is naïve enough to accept the apple from the serpent. After Laura is violated, "[h]er tree of life droop'd from the root" and her soul begins to "decay and burn" away, suggesting that Laura's life is tied to her purity (Rossetti, lines 260, 279). The most recognizable instance of Laura's Eve-like characteristics is through her interaction with the goblin men. Rossetti identifies the goblins as cunning, as they "[l]eer at each other" and are full of "airs and graces," while signifying the practice of wealthy Victorian men frequenting prostitutes and tempting young women to stray (lines 93, 337). Like the serpent in Genesis, they offer Laura fruit while still crying "'[c]ome buy, come buy" (line 104). That cry of "come buy, come buy" also carries a materialistic suggestion, as they are offering the sisters things to consume, all the while wanting to consume the sisters themselves. Laura falls for their persuasive song and "suck'd their fruit" not knowing the ramifications of her actions, another parallel to Eve's fall in Genesis (line 128). As in Genesis, the goblin men are successful in seducing Laura to fall. Unlike Eve in Genesis, however, Laura has her sister to fight for her redemption. Indeed, for Rossetti, both the angel in the house and the fallen woman have the power to save each other.

If Laura's role as the victimized fallen woman in the poem is relatively straightforward, Lizzie's character has multiple layers that further complicate and unsettle binary notions of feminine identity through her connection to Eve and Lilith. Lizzie is introduced to the reader after her sister Laura, a position that associates her with Eve, who came after Lilith according to *Alpha Beta Ben Sira*. Lizzie also represents aspects of the angel in the house, insofar as she is bounded by a "brook" and a "gate," both physical

borders that separate Laura and Lizzie from the goblin men and protect them from their lures. In appearance, Lizzie is also connected with iconography of the angel in the house. She is presented as "[w]hite and golden," two associations that symbolize purity and value (line 408). Rossetti takes the expected and unexpected aspects to illustrate alternative ways of viewing her female characters rather than presenting a limited and singular view of them. The lines that follow use similes to describe Lizzie and illustrate her isolation; she is "[l]ike a lily in a flood,-- / Like a rock of blue-vein'd stone / Lash'd by tides obstreperously" (lines 409-11). Rossetti here identifies Lizzie first as a delicate flower isolated and surrounded by a prison of water, then switches to hard and violent images such as "rock" and the "tides" that indicate her strength. Lizzie is also compared to "a beacon" standing alone in a "roaring sea" (lines 412-13). Her depiction as a beacon can be viewed in two ways. First, she is the light that will guide her sister back through the perils of temptation; second, she is a symbol of resistance, as she is the light barricaded inside a stone pillar while the storm of enticement continues to crash into her to no avail. In other words, Lizzie has the strength to guard against forces that seek to break her. Finally, as a "fruit-crown'd orange-tree" Lizzie is compared both to something physically rooted to the ground and to the purity of orange blossoms, the flower of brides in Victorian England (line 415). Though she is connected with virginity, however, she is also subtly sexualized in the line "[w]hite with blossoms honey-sweet" (line 416). The appearance of the blossoms as white may connote purity, but taken in conjunction with the words "honey-sweet," the blossoms also evoke taste and the idea of consumption and indulgence. Like the symbol of the dove, Rossetti takes another image of purity and re-works it to create a sexualized illustration of femininity that subtly questions the idealization of innocence.

The aspects of Rossetti's metaphysical associations are registered in the lines that follow. The next line suggests sexuality more overtly, blossoms being "beset by wasp and bee" (line 417). The bees' stinger is another phallic symbol and Rossetti's use of "[s]ore beset by wasp and bee" suggests a consequence from a sort of penetration. From a natural setting, Rossetti subsequently transitions to an urban one in which Lizzie is identified as "[l]ike a royal virgin town / Topp'd with gilded dome and spire" (line 419). This simile is mixed, on the one hand placing her within the borders of a town, and on the other identifying her with the phallic symbol of the dome and spire. Rossetti's use of phallic symbols to represent Lizzie's virginity could be seen as a critique of patriarchy, as the symbols are all inanimate objects, hard, unmovable, and not alive. However, they are also institutions that Rossetti connects with femininity, and therefore co-opt power. In fact, the entire stanza compares Lizzie to objects that are stationary and surrounded by uncontrollable forces that consistently try to breach the barriers that contain her innocence. In this way, Lizzie embodies aspects of both Eve and Lilith. The containment, passivity, and innocence of the imagery align her with Eve; at the same time, however, the symbols that suggest Lizzie is her own last line of defence against the barrage of advances that relentlessly try to penetrate her exterior also link her with Lilith's independent strength.

My use of Lilith and Eve to represent the double bind of patriarchy, in which women are supposed to simultaneously resist and submit, illustrates the problematic nature of such expectations. In order to resist, women must have the independence and strength to overcome authority; however, the contrary expectation that they must submit to patriarchal authority seems to call for weakness and passivity. Men want women to submit, but only to the "good" men. In "Goblin Market" Rossetti invokes bad men clearly through their appearance as

goblins but their actions are not in accordance with their looks. The goblin men "purr" and use "sugar baited words" (lines 109, 234). Lizzie's response is to flee:

> "No," said Lizzie, "No, no, no;
> Their offers should not charm us,
> Their evil gifts would harm us."
> She thrust a dimpled finger
> In each ear, shut eyes and ran. (lines 64-68)

This rejection of temptation overtly recalls the serpent as the tempter, but it also conventionally invokes Lilith's rejection of Adam's power: "[w]hen Lilith realized what was happening, she pronounced the Ineffable name of God and flew off into the air" (*Alphabet of Ben Sira* 23A-B). If Lizzie's strong will and independence associate her with Lilith, then her act of running away and locking herself behind the domestic boundary of the "gate" also aligns her with Eve. In this way, Lizzie embodies the contradiction between resistance and submission that Rossetti seems to be indicating.

Lizzie begins to break away from both her Eve-like characterization as the angel in the house when she asserts herself to save her sister. Her decision to leave the safety of the house becomes a double-edged sword, for in order to save her sister, Lizzie must sacrifice some of her innocence. In doing so, however, Lizzie does not become weak or fallen; rather, Rossetti seems to be revising the angel in the house ideal to signify a woman who is active and powerful instead of passive and contained. Once Lizzie has left the domestic border of the home, she awakens, not sexually, but via a conscious decision to really "listen and look" (line 328). Unlike her sister, Lizzie resists the fruit being forced upon her. Laura's fear that Lizzie will be "ruin'd in [her] ruin" thus proves not to be true (line 483). Instead Lizzie saves

her sister by letting the goblin men douse her in the juices of the fruit she refused to eat and insisting to Laura: "[h]ug me, kiss me, suck me juices … Eat me, drink me, love me; … For your sake I braved the glen / And had to do with goblin merchant men" (lines 468-74).

This sexually charged scene between the sisters, like Coleridge's chamber scene between Christabel and Geraldine in the previous chapter, carries a strong homoerotic undertone and there is sufficient criticism exploring lesbianism and the homoerotic elements within both texts. Indeed, even Gilbert and Gubar argue that Rossetti seems "to be dreamily positing an effectively matrilineal and matriarchal world, perhaps even, considering the strikingly sexual redemption scene between the sisters, a covertly (if ambivalently) lesbian world" (567). With that said, this project will focus instead on Frederick Roden's argument that "the powerful homoerotic element in 'Goblin Market' must be read in terms of—and cannot, indeed, be separated from—the Christian symbolism it contains, as well as its final resolution in heterosexual marriage and motherhood" (42). Therefore, in this highly sexualized scene, Rossetti seems to be framing the sisters as fallen, yet the effect of their exchange empowers and cleanses them. Rossetti's subtext here suggests Victorian society's judgment of women is flawed and contains a double standard between women and men. Patriarchy had created two identities for women: one, a perfect ideal that was almost impossible to live up to, and another identity in which they are social pariahs. Men, by contrast, were not held to the same standards and their promiscuous activities did not cause them to lose standing, even though the results of these sordid acts often endangered their families' health due to venereal diseases that "could later infect both wives and children" (Tosh 155). It is therefore important that Laura and Lizzie redeem each other through the act of communion in this scene. Not only do they wash away the sin of their interaction with the

goblin men, but their sisterhood establishes a connection to Lilith and Eve. It is through this sisterhood that the archetypal Lilith and Eve are able to escape the patriarchal blame that is often associated with the stereotypes of women, and it is through the sisters that they are refigured as positive appropriations of womanhood. In addition, it is also through the kinship of sisterhood and the sisters' characters that the gothic double can be applied and explored.

Laura and Lizzie's appropriation of Lilith and Eve establishes dualities that set the stage for doubling, and it is through the physical exchange between the sisters that the reader can view them as halves of the same whole. Utilizing plurals to relay interactions between the sisters, for example, Rossetti blurs the distinctions between them. For instance, the only physical attributes explored are "clasping arms and cautioning lips, / ...tingling cheeks and finger tips," which are plural and blur physical boundaries, creating ambiguity (lines 38-9). Rossetti uses language to disguise whether she is referring to one or two people. Rossetti's use of similes and symbols in the scene where Laura and Lizzie lie down to sleep invokes the idea of two people locked in one being. For instance, she compares the sisters to "two pigeons in one nest / Folded in each other's wings" and to "two blossoms on one stem" (lines 185-6, 188). The lines all conjure the interconnection between two things within a singular structure. The image of the two pigeons entwined within the nest connotes a home or vessel that contains both of them. Rossetti's associates doubling with terms that depict a safe homey environment rather than darkness and fear of the unknown. She is rewriting the gothic to unsettle the oppositional structure of the angel in the house and the fallen woman. She is challenging the idea that collapsing boundaries is scary—gothic—and suggesting that the idea of two identities existing within one base/host can be about connection rather than division. Not unlike Coleridge's image of the entwined snake and dove as a symbolic

representation of Christabel and Geraldine, Rossetti's sisters are physically connected to each other when she describes them as "[c]heek to cheek and breast to breast / Lock'd together in one nest" (line 197-8). Rossetti's repetitive use of the word "nest" —a safe space—suggests that she intends to convey an environment that nurtures both identities in place of the traditional gothic fear of replacement that often accompanies the double persona.

Because they are connected, Lizzie suffers when she has to watch her sister-self undergo pain. The only way to reconcile the two conflicting halves is for Lizzie "for the first time in her life" to begin "to listen and look" for the desire she has refused to acknowledge (lines 327-8). By resisting temptation, she finds a way to restore Laura and herself. Rossetti thus formulates a new understanding of women as neither corrupted nor innocent. Laura and Lizzie's interactions express the logic of connection rather than of opposition, and, by incorporating attributes associated with Lilith and Eve, they also provide a way to connect the first women who were often positioned as oppositional formulations of womanhood. The sisters, with help from Rossetti's allusions to the first women, suggest that every woman has flaws and that idealized purity is an illusion that no woman can live up to. In addition, Rossetti is suggesting that positive and negative characteristics exist in every woman and that only through joining together as sisters can women fortify themselves against patriarchal influences that seek to separate them.

At the end of the poem, Rossetti emphasizes bonds between women: "[f]or there is no friend like a sister / In calm or stormy weather" (lines 562-563). She does this by stressing that women should support and help one another, "[t]o fetch one if one goes astray / To lift one if one totters down / To strengthen whilst one stands" (lines 564-67). By framing sisterhood as a way for women to empower one another, she makes women responsible for

their own salvation. In addition, Rossetti is arguing that feminine redemption is not dependent on men or Victorian society but rather on women themselves: "[Laura]...would tell them how her sister stood / In deadly peril to do her good / And win the fiery antidote" (lines 557-59). However, the sisters in "Goblin Market" suggest more than just a celebration of sisterhood. Indeed, insofar as Rossetti's characters rewrite the mythologies of Lilith and Eve, Laura and Lizzie complicate the binary oppositions connected with religious discourse in Victorian society. However, Rossetti's poem, while seemingly empowering throughout the course of the text, loses traction at the end when Rossetti reinstates the patriarchal domestic ideal. In the end, Laura and Lizzie "both are wives / with children of their own" which may suggest that they end up restored to the confinement of traditional domesticity. Yet Rossetti is very careful to not directly refer to men or patriarchy in the last stanza, retaining instead the focus on sisterhood she explores. In this way, the sisters have refigured the angel in the house ideal by claiming the space and making it a place of active power rather than something that is merely passively occupied.

This poem is ultimately about connection rather than division. In a period where women were represented in terms of oppositional binaries, Rossetti constructs a text that subtly indicates the flawed logic surrounding the angel in the house and the fallen woman dichotomy. Her use of gothic fantasy in "Goblin Market" allows her freedom to critique gender ideology and thus makes the sisters' redemption possible. Of the ending, Catherine Maxwell points out that "no husbands or men are visible, and the children, who appear to be girls, seem like clones of their mothers" (85). This supports the idea that the figurations of Lilith and Eve, by the mere fact that they are the first literary constructions of womanhood, become the mothers to all women, aspects of themselves permeating through generations of

women after them. Rossetti offers the literary figure of Eve the chance to redeem herself and Lilith to be the heroic figure instead of the corrupted marginalized figure from scripture. Through Laura, traits of both Eve and Lilith appear: Eve's naive nature and Lilith's independence help facilitate Laura's fall. However, Lilith's strength and Eve's nurturing nature, through Lizzie, provide a way for her to redeem her sister. The first women function through the positive and negative characteristics seen in both sisters to provide a fluid depiction of nineteenth-century femininity, in all its flaws and complexities. Rossetti's facilitation of sisterhood offers a way for the first women and all women to find kinship with one another.

In conclusion, Rossetti's "Goblin Market" utilizes different elements to unsettle the binary ideals of the angel in the house and the fallen woman. Rossetti does something unique with her application of the gothic double. Instead of using the double to keep the sisters divided, she refigures the gothic to represent security. The double then becomes a device that facilitates connection and unity and helps reclaim the domestic sphere for women without patriarchal influences. By incorporating aspects of the first women into Laura's and Lizzie's characters, she reveals the flaws in the religious depiction of women in scripture and its role in influencing nineteenth-century femininity. Rossetti, in turn, uses Laura's and Lizzie's bond as sisters to connect Lilith and Eve and suggest that all women are linked through the idea of sisterhood. This story thus becomes a subtle critique of men, religion, and Victorian society, while simultaneously suggesting that women are interconnected through their bond as sisters. It is this kinship in "Goblin Market" that dismantles the oppositional binary ideals of the angel in the house and the fallen woman and provides a way to unify the sisters within the text.

Chapter Three

George MacDonald's *Lilith*: Flawed Women or Flawed Cultural Ideals?

George MacDonald's use of religious feminine archetypes in his novel *Lilith* (1895) allows an exploration of the erosion of Victorian ideas surrounding gender. Unlike Coleridge in "Christabel"(1816) and Rossetti in "Goblin Market," (1862) whose representations of Lilith and Eve are symbolic, MacDonald makes direct reference to Lilith and Eve, two of the main female characters, by invoking both their names and central characteristics. In addition, MacDonald also provides the reader with scriptural background within the novel. Like Rossetti, MacDonald explores the possibility of reconciliation through his use of feminine archetypes. Perhaps most notably, MacDonald questions the opposition of the angel in the house, represented by Eve who is confined to the home, and the fallen woman who is Lilith, an evil roaming queen, by situating his characters to offer challenges to the normative gender ideology of binaries. Lilith, who unsettles the fallen woman role, proves redeemable, while Eve's domesticity is associated with death. Between these two unsatisfactory alternatives is Lilith's daughter Lona, who offers a third possibility in the story of resurrection and substitution.

Lilith tells the story of Mr. Vane, a nineteenth-century man who stumbles across an alternate reality through a mirror in his library. Once on the other side he finds a guide, Mr. Raven, whom the reader later discovers is Adam in animal form. Raven takes Vane to his cottage and introduces him to his wife, Eve, who watches over the "dead" or sleeping people. Over the course of the novel, Eve never leaves "the house of death." Vane, however, sets out to learn about himself and meets three women who shape his quest: Mara, the daughter of

Adam and Eve; Lilith, Adam's first wife; and Lona, the daughter of Lilith and Adam. Lona helps Vane discover his capacity to love and trust. The novel is a complex exploration of spirituality, faith, forgiveness, and redemption.

MacDonald is a Victorian author who has only recently begun to interest Victorianist scholars. Though only a limited amount of criticism exists,[2] studies of *Lilith* tend to focus on gender constructions, religious myth,[3] and psychological aspects. Kath Filmer's analysis of *Lilith* links MacDonald to the Romantic gothic tradition, and to Coleridge, through his appropriation of the "flawed female figure" (91). Arguing against views of flawed women, Filmer suggests instead that Lilith represents the part of the self that is in need of redemption: "[we must] acknowledge we are vain and that the unredeemed life is lived in vain; that we are in Lilith and Lilith is in us" (101). Filmer notes in particular the connections between MacDonald's character Lilith and the Judaic Lilith. Rather than taking up Lilith's interactions with Victorian gender ideology, however, Filmer focuses on MacDonald's "social and cultural criticisms," which appear to be in conflict with the overt religious messages of the text (91).

Unlike Filmer, William Gray examines Lilith and Eve as opposing representations of Victorian womanhood. He suggests that MacDonald's Lilith and Eve symbolize "binary opposites: immortal life versus sickness, pain and death; presence and plenitude versus disintegration and dispersal; the power of the gaze versus vulnerability to the gaze;" and above all "impurity versus purity" (120). Gray claims that Eve's association with the angel in

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[2] Robert Lee Wolff's *The Golden Key* is one of the first full-length analyses of MacDonald's texts.

[3] Jeanne Walker and Bonnie Gaarden argue various interpretations of religious myths from representations of various ancient mythologies (Walker 61) to family trinities within the text (Gaarden 116).

the house ideal allows her to triumph over Lilith and preserve Victorian gender ideology. In identifying Lilith as an example of the resistant Victorian woman, Gray asserts she is "assimilated into the patriarchal symbolic order, that is, the House of Death" (125). Like Gray, Roderick McGillis connects MacDonald's *Lilith* with the structure of binary opposition. He argues that "binary thinking is masculine, aggressive, analytic, and adversarial... a reverse thinking—one that is feminine, passive, imaginative, and sacrificing—is equally flawed because one cannot live exclusively in a fairy land where names are necessary" (32). McGillis suggests the characters have paradoxical identities. Lilith is thus both a threat to children and men as well as "beautiful and liberating," while Eve, Mara, and Lona represent an "arid" virginal femininity. Despite his useful focus on gender, McGillis does not investigate the religious or biblical aspects of feminine identity in *Lilith*.[4]

MacDonald's uses the female archetypes of Lilith and Eve, who were the first notable literary definitions of womanhood in the Judeo-Christian tradition, to expose the flaws informing binary feminine identities. MacDonald's use of Eve and Lilith to upset the opposing ideals of femininity within *Lilith* is important, as it is his way to comment on both the religious and cultural figurations of womanhood. MacDonald scholars, however, do not analyze the ways Eve and Lilith as religious icons upset the opposing figurations of angel in the house and the fallen women. Nevertheless, the female characters in the text embody the shifting views of gender; MacDonald uses the first women to refigure and dismantle the binary opposition of angel in the house and the fallen woman.

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[4] John Pennington claims that MacDonald "re-interprets the Lilith myth, by which its very nature does not have closure," and states that through the characters Adam and Eve, MacDonald "simultaneously evokes the 'Genesis' story of the Bible" as "a subversive element of that story" (97).

Attitudes toward middle-class women were beginning to change around the 1870s. Women were starting to become vocal about central issues that affected them directly, including everything from marriage and prostitution to property laws. As a result, traditional views of men were also shifting as women were starting to demand that men take responsibility for their behaviour, particularly their sexual behaviour.[5] Refracting popular gender ideology, Coventry Patmore's "Angel in the House" (1854), identified woman as man's "moral hope and spiritual guide" (Poovey 10). On an ideological level, Mary Poovey argues, this idealized notion of gender performed two important functions. It was "integral to the separation of the spheres" on the one hand and provided a "defensible explanation for inequality" on the other (11). By the end of the century, however, this view changed as middle-class women began to move outside the domestic sphere. This change prompted the rapid decline of religious influence, which, before the middle of the century, formed "much of the character of Victorian domesticity" (Poovey 178).

While gender ideology related to women's social roles was changing, so, too, were those ideas about religion and marriage laws that underpinned normative femininity. The economic depression (1873-1896) prompted more unmarried women to enter the work place, while changes in marriage law inspired a "new vision of spousal equality" among many couples (Tosh 161). John Tosh suggests that while "[t]here was the same emphasis on the wife's duty to provide a morally wholesome home," "[h]igher expectations were also laid on husbands by the new stress on mutual conjugal passion as essential to a happy marriage" (158). While an emphasis on the man's role within the family and his behaviour were

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[5] John Tosh analyses the changing attitudes towards cultural views towards Victorian men and their sexual behaviour, commenting specifically on how they were held responsible for their sexual behaviour and its effects on the family (155).

changing around the end of the century, so, too, was the role of religion in Victorian families and societies.

The weakened state of religion was partly due to the new higher criticism of the Bible and partly a reflection of scientific advance. These forces challenged the credibility of the Bible, particularly the story of creation in Genesis. As Tosh notes, towards the end of the Victorian period, Genesis "became no more than a cultural myth" and a "growing number of people were emboldened to question openly the morality of Christian doctrine" (Tosh 146). The combined effect of the decline of religious influence and changing attitudes towards marriage and spousal roles was to upset previous notions about Victorian womanhood. Women were changing, and the women who were emerging "ceased to regard themselves as mere ministers of men's sensual pleasure, the spoilt darlings of the home, in part slaves, in part playthings" (Tosh 158).

In *Lilith*, MacDonald responds to a culture where science was discrediting religious doctrine as supernatural and was instead embracing notions of materialism that viewed as people consisting of just a body and a mind. In *Lilith*, Mr. Vane initially appears as a representative of the scientific Victorian mind. Over the course of the novel, however, MacDonald challenges this view, developing his characters as "beings whose spirits, or 'deeper selves,' are the most important component" (Hein xxv). His framing of his characters Lilith and Eve as symbols of the preconceived ideals of the angel in the house and the fallen woman, and later, his character Lona, refigures femininity and illustrates the changing views of gender, particularly those pertaining to feminine identity. MacDonald navigates these changes through his depiction of Mr. Vane who forms relationships with each feminine "ideal" that in turn changes his identity. For MacDonald, the journey is important. Using

religious figures—such as Lilith and Eve—he constructs a vision of a higher spiritual dimension, while refiguring nineteenth-century femininity. MacDonald did not readily agree with "the practice that offered biblical proof-texts as authority for any system of idea" (McGillis 387). In fact, McGillis argues, the very lack of references to God in *Lilith* demonstrated its release from "religious doctrine and open [it] up for wider interpretation" (McGillis 388). As a result, MacDonald's text is about more than just a spiritual journey. His use of popular religious icons is a comment on the state of late nineteenth-century gender models. MacDonald's use of the fantastic, meanwhile, allows him the freedom to discuss various aspects of faith and gender in a subtle way that weaves the two themes together while illuminating changes that both gender and religion were going through by the end of the period.

George MacDonald is arguably the father of modern fantasy. By the mid-nineteenth-century, fantasy had become a popular genre, developing out of German and English romanticism. In particular, MacDonald was influenced by Coleridge, whose theories of the imagination helped cultivate his own interest in the topic. As explained in the Rossetti chapter, the literary traditions of fantasy and the fantastic, as well as the gothic, "have extended and stylized motifs and metaphysics that [have a] long standing [tradition] in folklore" (Harris 19). Rosemary Jackson suggests that "the fantastic introduces confusion and alternatives; in the nineteenth-century this meant an opposition to the bourgeois ideology upheld through the realistic novel" (35). The fantastic and the gothic work in tandem with one another in MacDonald's *Lilith,* through "Vane's frequent attempts to discover and rationalize this new reality [which] emphasize the work as fantastic," while the character Lilith's "vampirism...that constructs female identity as a puzzle of oppositions" incorporates

the gothic (Harris 90-1). MacDonald's ability to combine elements from both modes, such as doubles, doppelgängers, and mirrors, to make "the unseen" visible and to "turn over normal perceptions and undermine realistic ways of seeing" provides for a complex reading of the text (49). In addition, as Jackson states, "fantasy recombines and inverts the real but does not escape it; it exists [as] parasitical or [as] symbolic to the real" (21). In *Lilith*, MacDonald utilizes the fantastic motif of mirrors to suggest the existence of a parallel reality and to create a gateway to this reality that exists simultaneously with the real world. Ultimately, he uses the fantastic in combination with gothic elements to create a subtext about the state of religious faith and gender. The double lets him deconstruct the ideals of the angel in the house and the fallen woman. By using the religious figures of Lilith and Eve MacDonald demonstrates the changing climate of gender ideology, specifically, the shifting views of women from domestic idols of the private sphere to contributors in the public sphere. MacDonald may use these female characters to reveal conflicting notions of feminine identity but it is through Vane that he attempts to re-imagine an alternative to the opposing binaries that existed at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

The reader first meets Mr. Vane as a young man sitting alone in his library after returning from his studies at Oxford. The reader learns that he has lost both his parents at a young age and that he feels "as much alone in the world as a man might find himself" (MacDonald 5). MacDonald positions Mr. Vane as a Victorian man, on the cusp of manhood, who has had no feminine guidance as a child. In the absence of a familial guide, Mr. Raven, an actual raven, appears to lead Mr. Vane through a portal contained in a mirror in his library to an alternate reality where he can begin the quest to develop his moral character. In the mid to late nineteenth-century, when the definition of manhood was being

"redefined to include a moral as well as physical dimension" (Tosh 112), men began internalizing the moral roles that were previously filled by women. In *Lilith,* Vane's quest requires that he use his own judgment to make choices, and through trial and error he determines his own morality. Mr. Raven sets Vane on a course where he interacts with different women in order to determine his role in the world. Through Vane, the reader meets Lilith, Eve, and Lona, who will help form his views of women and himself. By indicating that Vane is responsible for his own morality, MacDonald suggests that the previous role women occupied as the spiritual guides of men was changing. In addition to showing how man's role in society was shifting, MacDonald uses his female characters to expose the cracks in the opposing binary figurations of the angel in the house and the fallen woman that were the foundation of feminine identity throughout the first half of the Victorian period.

MacDonald explores direct conflicts central to the fallen woman and the angel in the house in Victorian society. MacDonald's Lilith is physically similar to Coleridge's Geraldine: she has a "radiant form," wears a "soft white robe" and has skin "like warm Ivory" (127). Unlike Geraldine, whose role as a Lilith figure becomes increasingly ambiguous over the course of the poem, MacDonald's Lilith is closely connected to the religious figure she represents. Revealing Lilith's history to Mr. Vane, the character of Adam digresses minimally from the original religious scripture:

> He brought me an angelic splendour to be my wife: there she lies! For her first thought was power; she counted it slavery to be one with me, and bear children for Him who gave her being. One child, indeed, she bore, then puffed with fancy that she had created her, would have me fall down and worship her. Finding, however, that I would but love and honour, never obey and worship her, she poured out her blood to

> escape me, fled to the army of the aliens, and soon had so ensnared the heart of the great Shadow, that he became her slave, wrought her will, and made her Queen of Hell. (MacDonald 147-48)

Adam's reference to Lilith's origins suggests she was supposed to be the first angel in the house. She instead becomes the fallen woman, having grown tired of the limitations of being "one" with Adam. Like Milton's Satan, she would rather be "Queen of Hell" than a slave. MacDonald's critique of Victorian men's expectations—that women are to love, honour, and obey their husbands—is conveyed when Adam states, "I would but love and honour, never obey and worship her" (147). His further suggestion, that she "would have me fall down and worship her," carries an air of absurdity in its tone. It is signifying that the idea of a man obeying or worshiping a woman is ridiculous; therefore, the expectation that women should obey and worship men should also be considered absurd. By reversing the expectations and placing women in the position of authority where they are expecting the submission and worship from men, eliciting Adam's negative response, MacDonald is illustrating man's unreasonable expectations of women to do the equivalent. At the very least, MacDonald is pointing out the double standard concerning marital expectations. In addition, by reversing gender assumptions he is subtly suggesting to his reader that love and respect are reasonable expectations, while believing that one's significant other should worship and obey oneself is self-aggrandizing.

As the fallen woman in the text, Lilith uses her sexuality to try to seduce Mr. Vane and then feed off his blood. Recalling his encounter with the demonic lady of the house, Vane suggests the gothic character of such reversals:

> Some evil thing was upon me!--something hateful! I would have struggled, but could not reach a struggle....Then I became aware of a soft hand on my face, pressing my head into the pillow, and of a heavy weight lying across me. I began to breathe more freely; the weight was gone from my chest; I opened my eyes. The princess was standing above me on the bed, looking out into the room, with the air of one who dreamed. Her great eyes were clear and calm. Her mouth wore a look of satisfied passion; she wiped from it a streak of red. (MacDonald 133)

This passage emphasizes Lilith's demonic qualities. In explaining his horror of Lilith, however, Mr. Vane focuses on his own inability to protest, rather than on her aggressive behaviour, as his immobility is not due to his own restraint. Like Jonathan Harker in *Dracula*, another fin-de-siècle text where women appear as dominant, Mr. Vane is unable to control the desire that Lilith causes him to feel. The negative reaction Mr. Vane has to Lilith's attack indicates mixed feelings. On the one hand, he expresses relief due to his release of sexual desire: "I began to breathe more freely; the weight was gone from my chest" (133). On the other hand, he exhibits disgust at his lack of self-control when he suggests, "I would have struggled, but I could not reach a struggle" (133). While this scene demonizes Lilith, it also empowers her, as Mr. Vane acknowledges her dominance over him. The phrase "[t]he princess was standing above me on the bed" highlights his vulnerability and Lilith's superiority and control in the situation (133). Again, MacDonald is reversing the more common view of women as weak victims; instead, he places Vane in the position of vulnerability both physically and mentally. MacDonald's Lilith, in essence, embodies previous ideas about the fallen woman. Unlike previous constructions, however, she is not entirely powerless or abject. Rather than being dependent on outside influences to define her,

Lilith is independent and defined by her choices. Good or bad, she is unapologetic and not ashamed of her actions.

MacDonald uses Lilith to dismantle ideas about the fallen woman as inherently evil, ruled by her passions, and irredeemable. In the story, Lilith fears death and thinks that her daughter Lona represents her annihilation; therefore, in Lilith's mind Lona is the key to her destruction. It is her fear that drives her to kill her daughter, only to find that when she does, she loses a part of herself that she can only reclaim through repentance and redemption. After Lilith kills her daughter, the ultimate sin in the text, Mara interrogates her before taking her to Eve in the house of the dead. During Lilith and Mara's exchange, the reader sees the cracks in the ideal that MacDonald subtly frames. Lilith is self-assured and strong in the face of the horrible acts she has committed. She is almost admirable in her self-determination to defy the idea that another can define or pass judgment on her. This, in particular, strays from the common framing of the fallen woman. In this passage, the reader sees Lilith's determination to define herself:

> "You are not the Self you imagine."
>
> "So long as I feel myself what it pleases me to think myself, I care not. I am content to be to myself what I would be. What I choose to seem to myself makes me what I am. My own thought makes me me; my own thought of myself is me. Another shall not make me!" "But another has made you, and can compel you to see what you have made yourself. You will not be able much longer to look to yourself anything but what he sees you! You will not much longer have satisfaction in the thought of yourself. At this moment you are aware of the coming change!" (MacDonald 200)

MacDonald's Lilith is more defiant than defined. Echoing Milton's Satan, she is a feminine figure of romantic heroism or anti-heroism. Near the end of the novel, the characterization of Lilith moves from unsettling common associations with the fallen woman ideal to symbolizing the death of the fallen woman when she finally repents and agrees to "die" or, rather, lie dormant until she can be redeemed (215). In MacDonald's constructed world, death is not death but merely sleep. When she asks, "'[h]ow long shall I sleep?'" Eve replies, "'[y]ou...will be the last to wake in the morning of the universe'" (218). Here MacDonald is suggesting that the fallen woman, like his character Lilith, is dormant but not destroyed, allowing the possibility for the ideal to be restructured and emerge in another form.

Just as MacDonald uses Lilith to critique the fallen woman ideal, he also utilizes Eve to subvert the ideal of the domestic angel who was positioned to be the moral compass of Victorian womanhood. Eve's first appearance is when Mr. Raven, whom the reader will come to know as Adam, brings Mr. Vane home with him. As they enter the cottage, Mr. Raven introduces his "wife," the only title she is given until later in the novel when she is discovered to be "[Adam's] Eve" (148). In the following passage, Vane idealizes Eve's purity in his description of her:

> She was all in white--as white as new-fallen snow; and her face was as white as her dress, but not like snow, for at once it suggested warmth. I thought her features were perfect, but her eyes made me forget them. The life of her face and her whole person was gathered and concentrated in her eyes... On her stately countenance rested—not submission, but a right noble acquiescence, an assurance, firm as the foundations of the universe, that all was as it should be. (MacDonald 28, 34)

Initially, Eve embodies the aspects pertaining to the angel in the house ideal. Mr. Vane reveres her and she immediately commands his respect. Her appearance as the personification of purity is offset by her refusal to leave her "home" because she has to tend her "children" who are, in fact, the sleeping dead. Subsequently, Eve becomes a mother of corporeal vessels, rather than of humanity, as her "children's" spirits—that which essentially makes them human—are dormant. The vision of the mother of humanity dressed "all in white" and tending vacant bodies suggests, in full gothic sensibility, that the angel in the house ideal itself is vacant. The idea of Eve, presiding over the "house of the dead" revises the angel in house as a gothic figure. Eve's role as the angel of death, rather than as the domestic angel, produces a disturbing image of the mother of humanity tending the dead.

MacDonald begins to depart from the traditional depiction of the angel in the house when Adam explains Eve's origins. After Lilith, he suggests, "God gave me another wife—not an angel but a woman—who is to this as light is to darkness... now beautiful as never was woman or angel" (MacDonald 148). Adam's description of Eve as "not an angel but a woman" exposes an unsettled view of femininity by positioning the terms "angel" and "woman" against each other. In *Lilith*, Eve's identity within the story is limited and stagnant, like her containment within the house of the dead. As William Gray argues, "there is a strong suggestion that in a sense it is the Mother Eve (the Eve of patriarchal construction) who needs to be killed for woman to achieve freedom and dignity" (118).

The symbolic representation of Lilith and Eve as problematic examples of the fallen woman and the angel in the house is an important aspect of the text. Lilith's characterization as a fallen woman stereotype is upset because she is also confident and independent. Though still suspect, Lilith is redeemable. Similarly, Eve upsets the ideal of the angel of the house,

since her domesticity includes attending to a house filled with empty shells. In *Lilith*, the once moral and spiritual guide of man is thus relegated to nurturing bodies in "the house of the dead." MacDonald's representation of Eve and Lilith offers an alternative view of the ideals they represent, but they have one commonality: both suggest how the binary positioning of the fallen woman and the angel in the house was becoming obsolete. Indeed, by the end of the novel Lilith and Eve demonstrate how far the dichotomy that defined women throughout the nineteenth-century had eroded.

MacDonald also develops this line of critique in his use of gothic images and symbols throughout the text. His use of doubles, and particularly animal doubles, connects femininity with primal instincts. In *Lilith,* many of the characters have animal doubles or "beast-sel[ves]" (MacDonald 30). Lilith's beast-self, whom Adam describes as the "creature that comes oftenest to the front," is a spotted leopardess (30). Due to the beast's appearance in Daniel's vision in the Book of Daniel and in the Book of Revelation, the leopard in literature and religion is often associated with sin[6]. Lilith's leopard-self[7] symbolizes her baser instincts, such as aggression, sexuality, and power. When Mr. Vane comes to the "princess's" castle in search of Lilith, for example, he encounters Lilith's leopard double:

> Toward one side stood a cage, in which crouched, its head on its paws, a huge leopardess, chained by a steel collar, with its mouth muzzled and its paws muffled. It

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[6] Daniel had a vision of four beasts in the Book of Daniel, the third beast was the leopard and his vision was repeated in the Book of Revelation: "I beheld, and lo another, like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it" (King James Bible, Daniel 7:6).

[7] It should be noted that Mara has a leopard form as well but her leopard form does not have spots and is known as the white leopardess in contrast to Lilith's spotted leopardess form: "The spotted leopardess was larger than the white… the white leopardess had the greater endurance" (MacDonald 92).

> was white with dark oval spots, and lay staring out of wide-open eyes, with canoe-shaped pupils, and great green irids. It appeared to watch me, but not an eyeball, not a foot, not a whisker moved, and its tail stretched out behind it rigid as an iron bar. (MacDonald 125)

The image of Lilith in her primal form, shackled and caged, is a powerful image of Victorian society's view of female sexuality. Already a being associated with sin, the leopard now combines raw power that inspires fear with the physical sleekness of a cat that connotes sexual desire. The physical restraints such as the "steel collar" and her "muzzled" mouth symbolically represent man's need to control. The "steel collar," in particular, indicates ownership and submission, while the muzzle suggests enforced silence. Building further on the symbol of caged female sexuality, Lilith and her animal double expose the restrictions of idealized womanhood. In animal form, Lilith represents aspects of femininity that are unrecognizable to Victorian man, who is symbolized by Vane. What Wollstonecraft argued in *Vindication of the Rights of Woman,* John Tosh later reiterates in *A Man's Place.* Specifically, Tosh speaks about how nearing the end of the century women challenged assumptions about "inferiority" by claiming "intellectual equality" (153). Women disputed previous identifications "because [they] refused to lead [their] lives by the patriarchal rules" (Tosh 153). When Mr. Vane first sees Lilith, she is in her animal form, shackled and muzzled, and he does not recognize her. In her animal form, she epitomizes hidden aspects of womanhood and makes visible, or symbolic, what Tosh describes as Victorian man's aim "to ensnare the woman like prey or to confine her to a gilded cage" (158).

The reason Vane cannot recognize Lilith is that these aspects of her character—independence, intelligence, and strength—are not commonly associated with femininity.

Even when Mr. Vane first enters the hall, he states that he went "unchallenged" until he came face to face with Lilith's animal form (MacDonald 125). Once Mr. Vane reveals his desire to meet Lilith, her leopard self escapes the cage and disappears only to re-emerge as Lilith herself moments later. In doing so, she hides certain aspects of herself so that Mr. Vane can recognize her as a woman, rather than a caged predatory animal. She explains, "I must do what I can to make myself intelligible to you. Our natures, however, are so different, that this may not be easy" (129). The fact that Lilith in her animal form can escape whenever she chooses presents her sexuality as a form of gothic power that she uses to illustrate the falsehood of control. Nineteenth-century man had sought to define and control women by placing them according to stereotypes of the fallen woman and angel in the house, but Lilith's ability to leave her "glided cage" whenever she desires positions female sexuality as a liberating force rather than a damning one. With that said, she represents a cultural fear, as Lilith's ability to control her own behaviour upsets the imaginary consolation that Victorian men could control female sexuality.

The beast-self is just one form of doubling in the novel that illustrates new views of women at the end of the nineteenth-century. The mother/daughter pairing of Lilith and Lona is another form. If Lilith symbolizes mature aspects of womanhood, Lona represents naive innocence; when placed in a mother/daughter pairing they suggest two halves of one whole. In the text, Lilith's daughter, Lona, incorporates all the positive aspects of traditional femininity that Lilith does not have: innocence, morality, a loving disposition, selflessness etc. Lilith then takes up all the characteristics that Lona does not have: experience, sexuality, aggressiveness, greed, hate and so on. Because Lona represents everything that Lilith is not, Lilith views Lona as "[o]nly good where evil was" (153). By embodying all the qualities that

Lilith lacks, Lona "in the dazzling beauty of Lilith" makes the unseen in Lilith visible as one-half of a whole; however, Lona still often comes across as one-dimensional. When Lilith kills her daughter, she effectively kills all the good and beauty in herself as well: "[Lilith's] face [was] that of a corpse, her eyes alone alive, wickedly flaming. She was again withered and wasted..." (185). Lilith shrivels as soon as she deals the killing blow to Lona. By killing her daughter who is, figuratively and literally, a part of herself, she is losing everything she hopes to gain, eventually becoming trapped "in the hell of her self-consciousness" (MacDonald 201). It is only after she repents and goes to sleep that she is released from her torment and reaches "the perfection of her womanhood" (229). In other words, she must die or "sleep" to be purified: "[t]hou shalt die out of death into life" (207). Lilith's "death" also signifies the death of the traditional fallen woman stereotype. With Lilith's "death," Lona is resurrected from her death-imposed sleep a re-imagined woman.

Through Lilith's death/redemption, a refigured woman awakens in Lona. In part, she takes on Lilith's powers; as Vane narrates: "[h]er eyes shone with the radiance of the Mother's..." (238). Other aspects of Lilith emerge in Lona with her rebirth: "in Lona the dazzling beauty of Lilith was softened...and deepened by the sense of motherhood" (165). In the nineteenth century, motherhood was an essential part of feminine identity and women, it was believed, were predisposed to this role due to their supposed innate nurturing qualities. In the novel, when Lona awakens with the incorporated aspects of a softer Lilith, it is her "deeper sense of motherhood" that gives Lona renewed purpose. Lona's rebirth also changes Mr. Vane's perception of her, as he now views her as a sexually mature woman. Lona, who re-emerges as a balanced woman "ripe with the loveliness of life essential," has gained Lilith's sexual maturity, but it does not tarnish her innocence or respectability: "her death

dress, filled with the light of her body now tenfold awake in her power of its resurrection, was as white as snow and glistening" (238). Her depiction in white clothing correlates with Vane's first vision of Eve, suggesting that Vane sees aspects of Eve within the resurrected Lona. In Lona, remnants of the angel in the house ideal are thus integrated with aspects of Lilith.

When Mr. Vane is sent back to his world, Lona is unable to follow him: "I held faster to the hand of my Lona...the door opened, the hand let mine go...I stood alone in my library" (MacDonald 250). MacDonald leaves the reader to question if Lona is in fact an example of the Victorian period's refigured femininity or if she is just Mr. Vane's re-imagined version of womanhood that attempts to meld the binaries of the fallen woman and the angel in the house. The fact that MacDonald conveys that Vane cannot hold onto to the re-figured Lona suggests that the new feminine ideal that he has created for Lona is just that, an ideal[8]. When he returns from the other world to reality, the idea that he was trying to hold on to the idealized version of Lona rather than Lona herself indicates that MacDonald was commenting on the difference between idealized womanhood and real figurations of womanhood.

Throughout the novel, the reader's perception of women is dependent on Mr. Vane's perspective. However, it also becomes apparent that Vane's identity as a man is dependent on the women who surround him. Even Vane's name connotes the male prerogative to make everything about himself, and in this case, Vane, or "Vain," regards the women around him in light of what he views as their desired relationship to himself. The end of the novel in particular makes the reader question the extent of Mr. Vane's personal transformation. Vane

[8] The end scene can also be interpreted to mean that Vane's inability to hold on to Lona is because she is more real than he is (MacDonald 250).

agrees to sleep in the house of the dead so that he can awaken with both a renewed sense of purpose and with Lona—who has been asleep since Lilith struck her down. When he and Lona awake from their "deathbeds," Vane exclaims, "she fell asleep a girl, she awoke a woman," recognizing both sexual maturity and the angelic "radiance of [Eve]" within Lona (238). Vane effectively reformulates old stereotypes in a new figure, creating a new ideal for himself. However, the question of whether Vane has changed by the end of his journey is left unresolved.

MacDonald's *Lilith* is an example of how religion, gender ideals, and the gothic function together in late nineteenth-century literature. Through his depiction of the female characters in the text, particularly Lilith, Eve, and Lona, MacDonald reconfigures the restrictive categories of the angel in the house and the fallen woman. In doing so, however, his interest in Lona as an integrative figure still suggests patriarchy's need to define women in relation to men. His use of the first women to embody these conflicting ideals is powerful, as is his decision to use Lona, the daughter of Lilith and Adam, rather than Mara the daughter of Eve and Adam, as a refigured representation of Victorian womanhood. Ultimately, MacDonald's text navigates the changing climate of both gender and religion at the end of the nineteenth century and illuminates the shifting views of women and men.

Conclusion

The nineteenth century contained various and often conflicting ideals when determining figurations of Victorian womanhood. In their attempt to solidify belief systems and concepts of gender, the Victorians created the binary ideals of the angel in the house and the fallen woman, which caused conflicting notions of identity formation for nineteenth-century women. Religion was also in a state of flux, starting out as an influential force at the beginning of the century but by the end losing a great deal of its power within Victorian culture[9]. Women, in particular, went through huge changes within the period. At the beginning of the century, the identification of women with existing constructions of femininity was under cultural scrutiny. Essentially, women were slotted into the cultural constructions of the angel in the house and the fallen woman, which were a mix of religious and cultural ideas that pitted the Victorian woman against herself. Navigating the fine line between domestic angel and fallen woman became a very popular topic for many writers, including Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Christina Rossetti, and George MacDonald. While these authors are just three out of many, their works incorporate conceptualizations of the fallen woman and angel in the house dichotomy and religious imagery, and all of them use the gothic to depict the confusion of feminine identity formation within the period. Each text provides a specific view of that particular time and place and illustrates the evolution of feminine identity from the end of the eighteenth century into the nineteenth century

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[9] John Tosh states in reference to the decline in religious devotion in the nineteenth century that, "[t]he new 'higher criticism' of the Bible from Germany compromised the credibility of holy writ as historical record" (146). He goes further to note that "[t]his onslaught resulted in a relative decline in middleclass membership of the churches... [and] by the 1880's [many] felt sufficient doubt or distaste to stay away from church and to abandon any regular spiritual discipline" (146).

Coleridge's "Christabel," (1816) conveys both the ambivalence and the tumultuous state of femininity at the end of the Enlightenment period. The characters Christabel and Geraldine, which incorporate the religious figures of Lilith and Eve, form a gothic double that demonstrates the inconsistencies associated with feminine identity, where on the one hand women were expected to be chaste and silent, and on the other they were to be sexual teases and manipulators. Christabel is the epitome of innocence and naiveté making her an apt symbolic representation of Eve. Geraldine, however, exudes sexuality and maturity, which is associated with a more Lilith-like persona. Religion contributed significantly to conceptualizations of feminine identity; the first women of the created world, Lilith and Eve, allowed religious attitudes to formulate the conflicting states of feminine idealization, but when authors used these figurations, they could explore a more diverse way of viewing both the characters and religious figurations they represented. Through Christabel, the reader sees a personal struggle for sexual maturity and patriarchal acceptance. In Geraldine, the reader views a sexually mature female who uses her desire to manipulate and seduce both Christabel and Sir Leoline. The gothic double functions as a way to complicate and illustrate the capriciousness of Coleridge's female characters as well as the state of feminine identity at the end of the century. Both characters are examples of extreme notions of femininity that need to be reconciled or else deconstructed altogether. While the double is initially a possible way for this deconstruction to occur, the fragmented state of the poem makes a complete reconciliation or deconstruction of the Christabel story impossible. In fact, the unresolved issues of the poem become symbolic of its point in time, as the state of feminine identity was very much unsettled at the end of the Enlightenment, continuing into the Victorian period.

As a result, the Victorians took control over what the Enlightenment had begun to unravel, placing women into one of two distinct categories: angel or fallen. By mid-century, the definitions of the angel in the house and the fallen woman were well in place, and the influence of religion, especially concerning women, was strong. In "Goblin Market," (1862) Rossetti explores the tensions inherent in a distinct good and evil binary opposition for women. Rossetti uses her characters Laura and Lizzie to illuminate these tensions and to subtly suggest that men were partly, if not completely, responsible for the victimization of women. Her critique of Victorian society in this poem helped to subvert societal expectations in order to create an environment where women worked together to help one another. Rossetti uses aspects of the first women to illuminate the flaws in each oppositional ideal and then refigures them to show the interconnections between both the sisters and women. Sisterhood within this text becomes a way for women to save themselves, unsettle binary definitions of womanhood, and undermine patriarchal influence. Through the sisters, their conceptual parallels of Eve and Lilith find common ground, as the sisters work together to help each other by utilizing each other's strengths. Lizzie is able to use aspects of both figurations, Lilith's independent strength and Eve's nurturing qualities, to help her fallen sister, and Laura is able to utilize Eve's trusting nature and Lilith's uncompromising will to let her sister help redeem her. By using the gothic double in her text, Rossetti refigures the double in a way that shows connection and emphasizes security rather than fear and displacement. The gothic and the double, used to characterize her female characters, become a source of female empowerment by which the women repossess the domestic sphere from patriarchal control. By the end of the poem—with the help of the gothic—the binaries that are clear at the beginning blur to the point that characters and religious figures are neither

completely pure nor simply tainted. Thus, Rossetti's text also foreshadows the beginning of the dissolution of strict religious ideology that was a result of the depression in the middle of the century.

Shortly after Rossetti's work appeared, an economic depression began to affect thoughts concerning gender and religion. The economic turmoil, which lasted twenty-three years, from 1873 to 1896, caused many Victorians, especially the working and middle-classes, and especially toward the end of the century, to become disillusioned with the church and religion[10]. George MacDonald wrote and published his novel *Lilith* during this turbulent time, providing a complex look into the dynamics of religion, spirituality, and feminine identity at the end of the Victorian period.

Lilith (1895) is one of the few texts to use the actual religious figures of Lilith and Eve within the novel, rather than just symbolic representations of them. MacDonald creates a complex world where the tensions within the text were not just based on gender but also on culture. He mixes a Judaic figure with Christian figures and uses their interactions within the text to illuminate the existing anxieties between the two religions. An interpretation of the traditional gothic double, which MacDonald combines with an unusual metamorphic element, reveals MacDonald's commentary on feminine identity that is particularly pertinent to thoughts regarding femininity. His critique of caged feminine sexuality is profound, and his use of gothic imagery to create this image is strategic. His use of the doubling is also slightly different as he uses the mother/daughter pairing of Lilith and Lona to depict the oppositional figurations of good and evil. How he places the first women in the text is

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[10] John Tosh states in reference to decline of religion in public opinion that, "one immediate consequence of [the] revolutionary developments in literary and scientific study was that a growing number of people were emboldened to question openly the morality of Christian doctrine" (146).

subversive; as the fallen woman, in order to be redeemed Lilith has to die, and Eve, as the angel in the house of the dead, becomes a mother to a garden of dormant bodies. The subtext is that both conceptualizations of womanhood have to "die" in order for a new ideal to be re-figured. It is through his depiction of Lona that MacDonald attempts to re-imagine femininity, and Lona finally unsettles the binaries of the angel in the house and the fallen woman in the text. *Lilith* thus becomes a representation of the evolution of the social and political changes surrounding gender and religion, particularly the state of feminine identity and religious influence at the end of the nineteenth century. As a result, it suggests new ways of viewing women within Victorian society, ways that do not condemn them for their revitalization.

The study of these three texts explored of the different stages of feminine identity from the end of eighteenth century to the end of the nineteenth century. It moves through the evolution of the conceptualizations of the angel in the house and fallen woman and the roles religious myth, specifically the mythology pertaining Lilith and Eve, played in shaping feminine ideals throughout the Victorian period. Coleridge's "Christabel," Rossetti's "Goblin Market," and MacDonald's *Lilith*, provide a broad view of this progression of feminine ideals. The gothic double becomes a catalyst for an application of the symbolic representations of the religious figures of Lilith and Eve to the texts and allows for a more complex reading of the female characters. Rather than just portraying the female characters as one-dimensional representations of femininity, the authors use the gothic double to explore alternate depictions of the characters within the texts. In addition, that doubling also opens up the context of the works for a larger interpretation of gender and religion within the nineteenth century. As a result, this examination illustrates how these authors depict how

women went from beginning to deconstruct cultural constructions of feminine identity at the end of the eighteenth century and the Enlightenment period to being restricted to the specific binaries of the angel of the house and the fallen woman to, finally, blurring the lines between those opposing figurations. These authors helped to provide a new interpretation of the nineteenth-century conception of the angel in the house and the fallen woman that had once limited and confined women. Through their writing and their characters the authors revealed that women were neither tainted nor fallen, but indefinite, constantly being reformulated.

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